Revolt - A Radical Weekly in Colonial Madras

Edited by

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Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam

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Preface

Revolt was the Self-respect Movement's first English weekly. In 1925 only 7% of the population in Tamil Nadu was literate. Yet, Periyar dared to start the Tamil weekly *Kudi Arasu* that year. In 1928, the year that saw *Revolt* being published, very few Tamilians knew to read or write English. It is surely a historical feat that *Revolt* continued to be published until 1930. Periyar's deep and abiding interest and commitment to destroying caste, women's rights, his opposition to obscurantist faith and belief, to Brahmins, and his endorsement of proportional representation led him to risk such ventures such as these. Outlining the reasons for starting an English weekly, Periyar noted that he desired the ideals of the Self-respect movement to be known to people outside Tamil Nadu; he also wanted an English forum to counter the views expressed by Brahmins and the politically selfish class against the Self-respect movement, which found an easy berth in existing English publications.

During the short period of its existence *Revolt* responded to national and international issues and concerns: the religious reforms undertaken by Amir Amanullah of Afghanistan; the Congress' problematic stance on untouchability; that party's double facedness in its dealings with the British (invoking in this context, Hegel's dialectic!); the controversy created by the publication of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*; the temple entry struggles organized by the Self-respecters; Dr Muthulakshmi's devadasi abolition bill, the Child Marriage Restraint Bill, and especially the orthodox Hindus' opposition to both… In each of these instances *Revolt* argued its case intelligently sharply, and its editor Kuthoosi Guruswami's wit and satire rattled many an orthodox person's composure. Guruswami' critical essays on the *Ramayana* were in fact sent to Gandhi and he was forced to distinguish 'his Rama' from the Rama that Guruswami's essays revealed.

Revolt and its editors were in touch with international rationalist and atheistic groups and published several essays on science, atheism. and so on. The weekly carried news of anti-caste groups elsewhere in India as well.

Revolt holds a veritable mirror to the times, and allows us to see the Self-respect movement in its context, and appreciate its – and Periyar's – perspective on various matters. Yet these views and ideas, especially

Periyar's principled opinions on a range of subjects are as valid for our times as they were for his – and so, to make available these ideas to today's young people in India and elsewhere, Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam decided to extract important and seminal articles from *Revolt* and publish them in a single volume.

Of the 55 published issues of *Revolt,* a few were entirely unreadable. We then requested V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai, whose contribution to Periyar Studies is well known, to sift through all the readable issues and make a selection for the proposed volume. They agreed to this, and have completed this task, for which we are truly grateful to them.

This volume is part of Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam's larger efforts to anthologise Periyar's speeches and writings, as they appear in *Kudiarasu* and we are indeed proud to be bringing out this English volume.

In solidarity

Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam

Freethought, Atheism and Social Radicalism in Colonial Madras

V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai

A secular, freethinkers' union was active in Madras in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It affiliated itself with and was perhaps known to Freethought circles in England. The union called itself 'the Chennai Suyaakina Sangam', calling attention to its will to think through rather than accept truth as given and handed down. The sangam ran two journals, *Tattuva Vivesini* in Tamil and *The Thinker* in English. We do not know enough about the circumstances that halted their publication, but the forthright and freewheeling critique of scripture and priesthood which *Tattuva Vivesini* put forth did leave its mark in the Tamil intellectual world. Some of the Tamil Buddhists who gathered around Pandit Iyothee Thass and those who were drawn to the rational aspects of Buddhism such as M. Masilamani and Professor Lakshminarasu in the early twentieth century knew of the Madras secularists.

This tradition of criticizing religion in public and suggesting a recognizably atheistic and rationalist world view was returned to history in the 1920s, with the founding of the Self-Respect movement. Voiced in public forums, private social gatherings and cultural events, and consistently argued in various Self-respect magazines and journals, rationalism and atheism acquired a characteristic resonance, as they spoke to and addressed the critical claims of their vernacular and historical contexts. Drawing on the marvelously lucid and satiric writings of freethinkers in Victorian and Edwardian England and the United States of America, Tamil atheists and rationalists deployed these learnt principles to advance a critique of the indecent inequities of caste society and Brahmins and Brahminism. They called attention, in particular, to the manner in which religion and politics intertwined and informed both the politics and practice of Congress nationalists, in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in the country. Self-respecters put forth a radical critique of Gandhi's 'resolution' of untouchability, which subjected the Mahatma's humane piety to pitiless, rational scrutiny. Such a lens was also taken to the women's question, and this led to the making of an extraordinarily rich feminist point of view, which baffles us even today, by its fearlessness and commitment to equality in both sexual and social relationships.

Revolt: A Brief Description

Amongst the Self-respect journals which adopted radical rationalism as their creed, *Revolt* stands out. For one, it was the first English language weekly to be published by the movement, and edited by Ramasami Periyar. Secondly, given its potentially wider readership, it constituted the Self-respect movement as uniquely internationalist – aligning it, both discursively and historically, with filial movements in the rest of India and with rationalists elsewhere in the world.

The weekly was launched at Erode, the birthplace of Periyar E.V.Ramasami on November 7, 1928, which, in the words of the leader written for its first anniversary number, was "that memorable day in the history of the nations, the day of the anniversary of the immortal Revolution in Russia, the day which is looked upon as the violent explosion of human liberty, the day which is memorialised by millions in Russia for the mighty mixing up of monarchs and the masses". It was printed and published by Periyar's wife Nagammal at 'Unmai Vilakkam Press' (Truthseekers Press).

The journal was briefly shifted to Madras and then back to Erode before it ceased publication in early 1930. In the declaration filed before the Judicial Magistrate for registering the journal, Nagammal said: "By the word 'Revolt', I mean breaking with restrictions. That is, breaking against that constraint which goes against nature and reason - whether in politics, in bureaucracy, capitalism or in gender relations - whichever constraint that violates human welfare (dharma) and human nature" (*Kudi Arasu*, 22.4.1928)

Revolt was thus at once agitational and pedagogic and given to the making of a transformed and new commonsense. Along with news of political Non-brahminism and the Self-respect movement, of various conferences and addresses, it carried articles on contemporary politics, social reform and ran regular columns on science, religion and atheism. *Revolt*'s editors and writers responded with alacrity to the anxieties of the hour, to pressing political and social events, such as the Simon boycott (1927) and the release of the Nehru Committee report (1928); the tabling of the Child Marriage Restraint Act and Devadasi Abolition Bill (1927-28). These situations were well-utilized by the paper's columnists to expound to the non-Tamil world, critical, home-grown ideas of Self-respect, mutuality, progress and justice. Indignant, wickedly funny and expounding a philosophy of social compassion and

comradeship, *Revolt* provided a much needed antidote to the sanctimonious tenor of political and social debates in Tamil Nadu. Unmindful of criticisms voiced from orthodox quarters and the nationalist press, however vituperative these were, *Revolt* persisted in its radicalism.

Revolt was initially edited by Periyar, along with S. Ramanathan, Periyar's peer and comrade in the Self-respect movement. Erudite, brilliant and consistent in his atheism and rationalism, Ramanathan wielded an elegant, ironic pen. Subsequently S. Guruswami, married to the feminist and rationalist, Kunjitham, took over as joint editor. Savage in its satiric intent and mocking in tone, Guruswami's distinct political humour and incisive prose created enduring vignettes of social hypocrisy, orthodoxy and authority. Most other writers who wrote signed articles in *Revolt* were associated with the Non-brahmin and Self-respect movements – K. M. Balasubramaniam, P. Chidambaram Pillay, R. Viswanathan, to name some of them. Some, including a few Brahmin contributors, appear curious critics of obscurantism and superstition and it is not clear what their political affiliations were.

Regular contributors to *Revolt* included those whom we only know through their pseudonyms or initials – 'Kirk' (which, if read as comprising Tamil syllables, means 'madman'),'Fountain Pen', 'Ritus', 'B.G.', to name a few. Sometimes we are able to identify the men behind the initials. 'P.C.P', for instance, was P. Chidambaram Pillay; 'Jeejay', was George Joseph, the intrepid nationalist from Kerala, and 'Esji', the inimitable S. Guruswami himself. Typically, editorials and lead articles carried no bylines. There was at least one consistent woman contributor, Miss Gnanam, whose witty and sharply edged criticism of religions is remarkable for its clarity and boldness.

Besides essays and columns by these and other writers, who wrote using pseudonyms, *Revolt* reproduced, sometimes translated from the Tamil, writings and speeches by Non-brahmin and Self-respect leaders, publicists and intellectuals, including Periyar, R. K. Shanmugam and A. Ramasami Mudaliar. It also extracted articles from like-minded journals published elsewhere in the country that featured the views of the Jat Pat Todak Mandal of Lahore, an anti-caste association, linked to the Arya Samaj; and which reported on Dr Ambedkar and the incipient dalit movement in the Bombay Presidency. *Revolt* followed anti-caste debates in Kerala, those initiated by Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana

(SNDP) Yogam. The magazine also featured regular news and views from the global world of rationalism and atheism.

Revolt in Its Time

Revolt was active for over two momentous years: from 1928-1930. The mid-and late 1920s were marked by workers' unrest in Bombay and Calcutta in key industries, the great railway strike and articulated rural discontent in the Andhra region of the Madras Presidency and the United Provinces. These years also saw the determined assertion of a radical anti-untouchability politics in the Bombay province under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar, which directly challenged the Gandhian approach to reform, and threatened to steal nationalism's moral aura from it. Besides, Congress nationalists had to contend with youthful militancy in Bengal and Punjab. The Young Bengal group and Bhagat Singh's Hindustan Republican Army (HRA) offered political alternatives that diminished the appeal – at least to the young – of habitual nationalist rhetoric that now appeared wan and discordant.

In the Tamil country, the years 1928-1929 were crucial for other reasons as well. The Devadasi abolition debates, occasioned by Dr Muthulakshmi's bill that sought to end the practice of dedicating young girls to temples, got under way in 1928. The Tamil cultural world was soon beset with a host of questions to do with social and sexual practices in caste society and the sexual subjugation of women. During the same period, H. S. Gour and Har Bilas Sarda's legislative efforts to raise the age of consent to conjugal as well as extra-marital sexual intercourse and restrain child marriage respectively incited orthodox opposition and fury in Madras (such fury was not exhibited in other parts of the country). In turn, such fury and ire led to the consolidation of radical opinion on the subject. Tamil radical thought to do with gender benefited too from nationalist horror over the publication of Katherine Mayo's infamous *Mother India* (the book was published in 1927) and the subsequent defenses of Hindu culture which followed in the following years. Self-respecters utilized Mayo's arguments to put forward their distinctive critique of caste and of women's status in Hindu society.

Tamil publicists and ideologues were also involved at this time in intense debates over the rights of the so-called untouchables to enter temples. Self-respecters were in the forefront of several temple entry struggles and active in other causes to do with opposing and castigating untouchability. They were particularly watchful and critical of moderate

reformists who were eloquent on the subject during these years and keenly sensitive to Gandhi's incredible sophistry in matters to do with the so-called untouchables.

These disparate historical events constellated into a restless and trying historical conjuncture, whose significance was not lost on the nationalist Congress. There were rumblings in its own ranks, expressed best in Jawaharlal Nehru's call for going beyond a politics of seeking autonomy, home rule or dominion status: in the Madras conference of the Indian National Congress, he insisted that nationalists demand 'purna Swaraj'. There was discontent of another sort as well, articulated by decidedly 'Hindu' Congressmen who were none too happy with attempts to engage the Muslim League's fears and concerns in the drawing up of a constitutional scheme for Indian governance. These two tendencies had to reckon with a third: the desire expressed by a section of Congressmen to break with Gandhian Non-cooperation and enter the legislature. High idealism, a barely concealed Hindu nationalism and an articulated desire for political office: to address these disparate interests, Congress had to design a solution that was both ethically credible as well as politically astute.

Gandhi turned out to be the man of the hour. He succeeded in both recognizing and restraining the younger Nehru's political ardour; he endorsed the Motilal Nehru Committee's proposals for constitutional reform, even though they did not offer nearly enough to the Muslim League; and outlined the conditions in which Congress nationalists could remain opposed to colonial authority, even while being part of the legislature. He also lent this support to the Child Marriage Restraint Bill. The Calcutta Congress session of 1928 was the battle ground on which this Gandhian consensus was forged: a lofty nationalism was proclaimed, which conceded nothing to the political radicalism of either Young Bengal that was on the nationalist fringe, or the HRA; and which chose to ignore the anti-caste protests in the Madras and Bombay presidencies. Hindu-Muslim unity was loudly and endlessly affirmed, even though Jinnah would denounce Congress' political reform proposals immediately thereafter; and importantly Congressmen were offered an honourable way of being legislators and opponents of government at the same time.

Gandhi's moral rhetoric and political acumen won the day for Congress, and it is noteworthy that his political and moral choices were not locked

in creative tension, as they had been in the Non-cooperation years, and dovetailed all too easily into each other. In fact, this period saw the beginning of Gandhi's passive revolution, and one that would unfold in all its detailed brilliance in the years that followed, until the Congress took office in 1937. As Antonio Gramsci noted from a faraway Italian prison, Gandhi's passive revolution secured for the nationalists their hegemony. Over the next decade, they absorbed restive social and political energies and in some instances accommodated them – the emergence of a socialist group in Congress and Gandhi's Harijan Sevak Sangh engaged with the opposition, so to speak, and sought to co-opt it. Patriotic rhetoric and moral seriousness that accompanied this cooption helped sustain Gandhi's passive revolution.

The self-respecters responded to these events in anger and derision. They brought their formidable critique of caste inequities and women's status as well as their distinct vision of a just and free society to bear on the moment at hand. They noted that nationalism was a slippery and dissembling ideology, and pointed to the manner in which considerations of caste and women's status mediated nationalist understanding in any given instance. They insisted that political reform was meaningless without social reform and argued that the former achieved its aims through actively retarding the progress of the latter.

In this context, they affirmed the importance of political Non-brahminism and defined its characteristic features. They also proposed their own agenda for social change and progress, which was discussed and resolved at the First Self-respect Conference held in Chinglepet in 1929. The resolutions tabled at Chinglepet expressed an alternative political imagination, and must be read along with the Nehru report, if only to delineate the contours of what was elided and suppressed in nationalist representations.

In its editorials and essays, *Revolt* captured the intensity of these years and took critical stock of extant political and social debates. In fact much of its content, apart from the regular columns on atheism, science and rationality, comprised views on any or all of these issues. Its genius lay in articulating an analytical framework that integrated diverse historical developments and showed them to be part of a unique and complex conjuncture. *Revolt* understood too that the possibilities of such a conjuncture stood to be compromised by Gandhi's passive revolution. Its enduring importance lies in this, that it offered a critical

perspective of its time, without the advantage of hindsight.

From Revolt

This selection of articles from *Revolt* has been made, keeping in mind the historical conjuncture in which the magazine was published. For heuristic purposes, the selection has been arranged under different heads, and as readers will find out, most pieces can and ought to be read across chapters and sections. Each of the four parts comes with its own brief introduction. Each part is further subdivided into thematic sections – these relate to events, personalities, ideas or particular ideological concerns. Each section is further divided into sub-sections. In the latter, wherever they relate to the same idea or topic or event, texts have been grouped together. Wherever necessary, we have provided brief notes on events and personalities.

We have reproduced the text of the articles as found in the original. *Revolt* appears to have not standardised spelling and transliteration of Tamil names and places and we have not attempted such a standardisaton ourselves.

With regard to the issues of *Revolt* that were made available to us, a few were not readable at all. With respect to the rest, we have attempted to be accurate in our transcriptions of the original texts and retained original spelling and transliteration practices, even where these appear inconsistent to modern editorial taste. Wherever sentences appear unclear or have been smudged by time and indifference, we have used ellipses to indicate incompleteness.

We would like to thank all those who have supported our work, especially Punitha Pandian and Kolathur Mani for sustaining a consistent anti-caste politics in Tamil Nadu, and for giving their all to make this book possible. Special thanks are also due to Thamaraikannan of Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam and K.Buvanasekar for helping us prepare the manuscript; C. Arumugam for assisting with design and Shubashree for preparing the index.

Part I

Nationalism and Anti-Caste Radicalism

The Self-respect movement was not merely a social reform movement. Rather, it considered itself espousing and representing an alternative politics and one in which social concerns were as central to its vision of an ideal polity as political ones. This politics was defined in two ways: as a critique of and in contrast to Congress nationalism; and as political Non-brahminism. Self-respecters prised apart Congress Nationalism and subjected its truth claims and patriotic rhetoric to relentless critical interrogation. Gandhi proved a frustrating object of critique for them: intrigued as well as irritated by his moral creed, they yet dared to disagree with him. They would do this forcefully in the 1930s, but in 1928-30, the passive revolution that Gandhi had begun, held their attention if not imagination. Later on they would mount a devastating critique of Gandhi and Gandhism, much in the spirit of Dr Ambedkar's latter day, *What Congress and Gandhi did to the Untouchables.* However during these years, they were unsparing of other Congressmen, especially the Swarajists in Madras, whom they accused of unregenerate caste pride; nor did they allow Congress Conservatives such as Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sardar Patel their high moral ground, and were derisive in their criticisms of either.

Self-respecters understood political Non-brahminism as a creed that rejected what one of them termed, in the manner of Dr Ambedkar, the graduated privileges of the caste order, opposed brahminical pride and social power, endorsed the rights of untouchables to an equal, self-respecting and free existence, and which upheld women's sexual and conjugal choices, as well as their right to education and independence. In practice, this expansive, radical understanding translated into supporting proportional representation for Non-brahmins and Adi Dravidas in education, the services and governance, and social reform that addressed the horrors of untouchability and female sexual subordination. Political Non-brahminism was also the mainstay of the Justice party, the premier Non-brahmin party in the

Madras Presidency, but in this case, it was as much a strategically held idea as a serious political notion.

The essays and addresses in this section reflect the uneasy and contentious co-existence of Nationalism and Anti-caste radicalism in colonial Madras. The first section comprises essays on the Congress: including brilliant analyses of that party's political pragmatism that was guided, as these writers demonstrate, neither by idealism nor by spontaneous and heartfelt action, but by stratagems that both expressed and constituted a will to power. The arguments that make up these analyses address the Calcutta Congress session of 1928, and its many meanings – as we argue in the introduction to this book, this Congress session was significant in that it achieved an important stage in Gandhi's passive revolution. There are also to be found here vivid and indignantly described vignettes of the Brahmin Congressman in Madras and his unabashed assertion of caste vanity. There are articles that challenge the political and social conservatism of Pandit Malaviya and Patel. The various essays on Malaviya are interesting in that they give expression to a consistent anger and bewilderment at how the former could hold the views that he did with respect to untouchability and the status of women. The anger is all the more acute, since he dared voice them in the south, in Madras and Kerala where anti-brahmin and anti-caste militancy was articulate and bold.

There were perhaps other reasons too that compelled this show of ideological resistance to and refutation of Malaviya. Arguing that untouchability was a caste Hindu problem for which the latter had to suffer and repent, Gandhi often pointed to the example of men like Malaviya who condemned untouchability, even while remaining orthodox and firm in their adherence to varnadharma. Gandhi's reasoning was: it is not religious scruple that is responsible for the persistence of untouchability, but ignorance and blind faith in what was believed to be time-worn custom. Gandhi also noted that in this sense untouchability was an excrescence and not integral to varnadharma, which is why Malaviya, who upheld the latter, would yet oppose the former. To prove the worth of his arguments, Gandhi was wont to pay obeisance to Malaviya's conservative and even regressive views and note with wonder that if his satyagraha could move this man, then its practice was indeed efficacious (Vol 45: 144). Gandhi was also openly admiring of Malaviya's piety and exhibited an exaggerated

reverence towards him, which no doubt annoyed those who were impatient with Malaviya's unbending orthodoxy (Malaviya's untouchability removal efforts comprised 'cleansing' them and initiating them into Hinduism, in short, the practice of *shuddhi* and *sanghatan*, made popular by the Arya Samaj).

The Self-respecters, who at this point in time, were uneasy with Gandhi and yet did not openly condemn him in all instances, did not mind training their critical anger at this man, who Gandhi assumed to be his moral measure.

The section on Nationalism ends with a critique of khadi, which is both empirical and ideological.

The second section comprises articles on the Self-respect movement, and its anti-caste radicalism. Here are to be found rich descriptions of its ideology by both Self-respecters as well as respectable Non-Brahmin leaders such as R. K. Shanmugam and A. Ramasamy Mudaliar. The latter though spiritually inclined yet found much to praise in the movement's wonderfully argued atheism. The fact that men such as these who were political liberals yet felt impelled to respond to the philosophy of Self-respect indicate how the movement had achieved a radicalization of Non-brahmin politics in the state.

In this section are also articles on socialist politics – a declaration of support for striking railway workers, a tribute to the Congress radical, Jatin Das, a critique of capitalism, reproduced from an American rationalist paper, which argues that obscurantist belief wins the day for Capital and a note on the ertswhile Soviet Union. The Self-respecters would acknowledge their socialist sympathies even more boldly a few years hence in the 1930s, but even here we find a political empathy with the idea of socialism and the ostensible achievements of the first Socialist State.

Section three is about the politics of Non-brahminism. The success of the first Self-respect conference (1929) was registered most fitfully by the ideologues and publicists of the Justice party who defended it from nationalist and Brahmin criticisms. However, and this is evident in the manner Non-brahmins (of the Justice party) and Self-respecters defined their own sense of what they were, there were differences between Justicites and Self-respecters. This is best captured in the presidential address of N. Sivaraj – a leading Adi Dravida intellectual

and a prominent Justicite – at a Non Brahmin youth conference in which he marks the limits of what has been achieved and what is yet to be done.

We also see how strategic Non–brahminism goes into crisis, from articles that address the Justice party's Nellore conference. Periyar Ramasami in fact was keenly aware of the dangers of the former, as is evident from his criticism of the Justicite Ramasamy Mudaliar's wavering on the issue of proportional representation. More generally too Self-respecters were watchful of strategic political reasoning – as is clear from *Revolt*'s reporting of Non-brahmin politics in the Bombay province.

The third section is devoted to articles that demonstrate the making of anti-caste radicalism, which conservative Justicites and radical Congressmen feared alike – it comprises responses to *Revolt* and its brand of journalism.

1 THE PERILS OF NATIONALISM

1.1 The Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress

Unity Achieved

The Congress has achieved unity at Calcutta. For quite some time now it has done nothing else but achieve unity. Since the days of the Surat session right up to Amristar, the Congress went on year after year, giving birth to varying degrees of unity between its moderates and extremist wings. Amristar saw the birth of the Gandhian school and that session brought about unity between the new born child and the Tilak party after a dispute over the Montford reforms "which were inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing". Next year at Calcutta, the Gandhians got the upper hand but they had to bend to the prevailing sentiment and agree to unity with the Nehru party and water down Non co-operation by introducing the word' gradually'. At Nagpur unity was achieved between Mahatma Gandhi and Deshbandhu Das after an exchange of lathi blows among the Bengali delegates. The Ahmedabad session was probably an exception to the rule; though the seeds of disruption were there already implanted they could not germinate in an atmosphere tense with the expectation of great events. At Gaya there was a very superficial defeat of the Swarajists who quickly rallied and completely asserted themselves in the very first meeting of the All India Congress Committee a month after the Gaya Congress and rendered the No-Changers completely innocuous.

Thereafter the No-Changers went on the inclined plane: at Delhi, Moulana Mohammed Ali committed them to unity with the council-wallahs and at Cocanada, Mr. Rajagoplachari dissolved them, denied that they ever existed and achieved unity between himself and the Swarajists. Next year, at Belgaum, the most remarkable unity was achieved, a compromise between the spinning wheel and the councils giving birth to the spinning franchise. The new born child hardly ever saw the light of the day. With the obliteration of the Non-co-operators, the Swarajists became masters of the situation and were faced with the disconcerting fact that they had none left to achieve unity with. Hence,

in order to rejuvenate the Congress, they divided themselves into two rival camps, the consistent obstructionists and the discriminate oppositionists, or as they facetiously put it, responsive non-co-operators and responsive co-operators. These two sections occupied two sessions of the Congress achieving unity between themselves and sanctioning the acceptance of certain offices and disapproving the acceptance of certain other offices within the gift of the Government. The dividing line between these two parties was too thin and the unities achieved did not strike the imagination of the Congressmen.

The proceedings of the Madras Congress were very stale. The delegates sat regretting the disappearance of exciting days: when, all of a sudden, somebody was struck by a brain wave. Why not convene an All Parties Conference and achieve an all-round unity which will devastate the country from one end of it to another? A magnificent idea! It was immediately given shape. In the fullness of time it produced the Nehru Report as a just retribution for the sins of England against India. The moderate and the extremist, the Swarajist and the responsivist, the co-operator and the non co-operator, the Hindu and the Muslim, everyone could drink deep at the fountain of unity fashioned by the Nehru Committee. But it is possible that there can be too much of a good thing. The best drinks often satiate. So it was with the Nehru report. By bringing about actual agreement between the contending parties, it killed the scope for further incentive, for fresh achievements in the direction of unity-mongering. Even the mighty Nehru committee must achieve unity with someone or another. Otherwise their fate is sealed. The Independence League has obligingly come forward to save the situation. Dominion Status versus Independence! What a glorious prospect for unity! The occasion must be celebrated with special éclat and none else, but the saint in retirement would do to officiate as the high priest. Amidst the rejoicings of the lacks and lacks of people gathered in Deshbandhu Nagar the latest brand of unity is being brought into existence at Calcutta to meet the "exigencies of the political situation". The Calcutta Congress is successful Vandemataram.

We wonder if Congressmen ever read Hegel. The German philosopher thought that truth had two sides, one opposed to the other. He conceived it to be his special mission in life to reconcile the two and bring about unity. The essence of reality was, to him, such a synthesis of opposites. Thus, Being and Non-Being were synthesized by him into Becoming which was the unity, hence the ultimate truth. He could

not find scope for truth in anything one-sided. One day, contemplating about the rich traditions of India and of Asiatic people generally, he thought there might be some truth in them after all; and hence he immediately went in search of the opposite, the rival aspect of the truth. He found the rival in Africa. He was satisfied with the find and sat down to effect the synthesis, to bring about the unity. Asia and Africa, the opposites meet in Europe, do they not? Hence Europe is the synthesis, Europe is the ultimate truth, Asia and Africa merely its superficial aspects! Hegel was startled at this conclusion and hence satisfied. Unconsciously though it may be, the Congress veterans are treading in the footsteps of the redoubtable German Philosopher. Every session of the Congress is intended merely for the manufacture of a special brand of unity. The latest achievement is quite characteristic and thoroughly Hegelian. Dominion status is the thesis, Independence is the anti-thesis and Non-co-operation is the synthesis, which is the unity. Quite startling, is it not? Success is assured for the Calcutta brand.

Gandhiji talks about the inferiority complex. May we humbly suggest that he should first investigate the unity complex of the Congress which blocks all practical endeavour and leads high aspirations to mere verbal expressions and frothy achievements. Freedom can be won by men who have the courage to stand aside and risk the consequences, never by those who are afraid of loneliness and crave for company. The craze for unity is the outward manifestation of the fear in our heart. Unity resolutions are the ebullitions of the coward we harbour within our breast. Shall we discard our fear, destroy the unities and march forward to dare and to do? Or shall we walk the easy and the beaten track and continue to move in the vicious circle which turns out a special brand of unity at every Congress session?

– *Revolt*, 2 January 1929

Our Chameleons

The Calcutta Congress marks an epoch in the growth of political parties in our country. The Swarajists have made their exit and the Independence party has emerged as an organised group.

The Swarajists are gone, once for ever. Does any one doubt it? Let him but watch the courtesies that quondam Swarajists exchange in public. The Madras hartal during the Simon visit was a failure. "Because Satyamurti lay hidden weeping, under the cot in his zenana." So says

the leader of the Swarajya party of his deputy. "Because Swami Venkatachalam was struck with remorse at the prospect of losing his business." So says the deputy of his chief. No patient survived such dangerous diagnosis. Least of all could the Swarajya party.

The Independents have emerged out of the Calcutta Congress. Not that there were no Independents before Calcutta. Moulana Hazrat Mohani was their great forerunner. He made his influence felt even at the Ahmedabad congress which was a one man's show. The Moulana's amendment pressing for Independence occasioned a spirited opposition by Gandhiji and was summarily rejected by the house. But the idea held on. At every successive session the voice of the advocates of Independence was vociferously heard. Pandit Gouri Sankar Misra and Bulusu Sambamurti kept the flag flying and defended it against odds until the Madras session. At Madras Pandit Jawaharlal, fresh from Soviet Russia, made his debut in the Congress. He plumped for Independence and carried the house by storm. But the storm ceased without effecting perennial damage. Independence was to be arranging an All Parties Convention and the drawing up of a Report. All the emphasis was on the latter, the actual. The independents did not succeed at Madras.

The year following was noted for the activities of the Nehru Committee and the production of its Report. The intensive propaganda on behalf of the Report tended to obliterate the distinction of parties in the country. It almost looked as though the unity stunt would succeed. That was precisely the object of the Congress resolution. But the prospect of a coalescence of parties was extremely distasteful to a section of our "leaders". They made up their minds not to yield the palm to the Conventionists. They gathered in their strength at Calcutta and won the victory. It suited their purpose to sail for the time being under the flag of the Independence party. Who are they? Their history is worth telling.

There is a type of politicians who wants to be taken as the sole and the special repositories of all the available patriotism in the country. Extremism is their creed, they do not flinch from professing the highest of ideals. Nationalism is their trade mark which lesser mortals dare not infringe. It is protected by the sanction of their thundering press. They are a warlike race. They will not wait. They promise fulfillment before the minute is out. You shall not venture to ask them for their credentials.

They do not believe that words need be followed by actions. Promises liberally broadcasted are ends in themselves. Before you recover from the splendour of one promise and have time to discover that it will not, it cannot be fulfilled, you are overwhelmed by the brilliance of a new promise – a thing absolutely fresh and grand, a short cut to fame and glory. These super patriots are quick change artists.

Originally, they styled themselves the Nationalists. They made their entry into Indian politics as opponents of those Moderates who founded and built up the Congress. They were distinguished from the Moderates by their lack of restraint in talk and the poverty they exhibited of achievement of the Congress (sic). The Nationalists had the free run of the country for years, practically until the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi on the political arena.

In those early days there were anarchists in Bengal and elsewhere, in much larger numbers than there are now. Nowadays if any body talks of violence, we know exactly what he means: he has either lost an election at the municipal ward or he intends to ask for a loan of two annas from you. The Gandhian talk of non-violence has killed the go in many a bomb-thrower. Not so in the hoary days of Nationalism. There were youths about who had an uncanny habit of matching their acts to suit their opinions. The Moderate openly expressed his horror. But the Nationalist, to serve his own private ends, preferred to speak in enigmas. He said, the anarchist was bound to exist, as long as National aspirations remained unsatisfied. The anarchist was bound to exist, even as he was bound to get hanged. The Nationalist would not refuse to serve as the hangman, only he would like to point out that there was a mysterious connection between himself and the anarchist, even if it be the connection between the executioner and the condemned. Mind you, the Nationalist was not responsible for the bomb, in fact he condemned it. But the pity of it was that the bomb was there because his own desires were not satisfied. And so on and on, he fenced until his coffers were filled by the people, and occasionally, by the bureaucracy. As the net result, the Nationalist gained a victory over the less nimble Moderate and the anarchist got exploited into the bargain.

That was before the days of Mahatma Gandhi. The Non-co-operator came in with such a strange faith and in such numbers that our super patriot was, for the nonce, worsted. The setback was temporary. The Nationalist quickly rallied. He made the discovery that he could still

lay claim to a patriotism superior to that of the mere No-change Non-co-operator. He changed his colours and became a Swarajist. He proclaimed he thereby went one better than the Gandhian school. The No-changer boycotted the legislative councils and non-co-operated with the bureaucracy from without those councils. The mouth of our patriot watered at the prospect of his getting into the councils. He therefore gave out that he intended to walk into the councils only to practice non co-operation from inside the councils themselves. He would dare to beard the lion in his own den. Hurrah! For such bravery, the Swarajist deserved to win at the polls, and he did win.

Non-co-operation created a fashion for getting into jail. And thousands flocked into prison, "even as the bridegroom seeks the nuptial chamber." On the crest of a surging emotion it is possible to make such a demonstration of sacrifices *en masse.* But our Swarajist friend never lost control of himself. He had a wholesome fear of jail life. He was at one with the Moderate in disapproving of self-denying ordinances leading to prison gates. But unlike the Moderate, the Swarajist had no objection to reap the benefit of the sacrifices of the Non-co-operators. "Have not thirty thousand heroes marched to the jail to save the honour of the country? Therefore, vote for me, I am their representative. Have you faith in the programme of Mahatma Gandhi? If you have, vote for me, I am heir to their belongings." Such was the logic of the Swarajist appeal. But it caught on, and they managed to gather votes. Another defeat for the weak kneed Moderates. Another adroit exploitation, this time of the jail birds.

The Swarajist idol soon betrayed its cloven hoof. Once inside the councils the enervating atmosphere had its effect. Some accepted offices under the Government. Others became sour because they could not secure offices for themselves. Their election cry turned out to be a palpable hoax. The party stood thoroughly discredited. The Swarajists dared not face the electorate again under their original colours. There was a need for a change of colours. Our chameleons saw their opportunity at Calcutta. The Swarajist flag is cast off and Independence is proclaimed. The new slogan will catch at the coming elections. They have the blessing of the Congress. It will be plain sailing.

Young Bengal may be serious about Independence. Young men all over the world are terribly serious. But Young Bengal did not play its part at Calcutta. Young Bengal served a purpose, somebody else's

purpose. On the eve of the Congress the Swarajists were threatened with extinction. The Congress has saved the Swarajists. It was done at the cost of Young Bengal. The Swarajists suffered but a change of name. They are intact as a party – the Independents. Well may Mrs. Besant shed tears. It was another defeat for the Moderates. And a fresh exploitation of a third party, this time of Young Bengal.

Men may come and man may go, but our chameleons go on for ever. From Nationalism to Swarajism, thence to Independence, they will change their hue to suit the "exigencies of the political situation." But their identity will be unmistakable. They will keep loyal to their ideals amidst the maze of ever changing colours. They will oppose the practical workers, they will exploit the idealists. We may spare our tears for the Swarajists who are no more, for they have but taken a new incarnation. They walk in all their glory as the Independents. The Swarajists are dead, long live the Swarajists.

- *Revolt*, 9 January 1929

Ambulatory

The Congress gathered in great pomp on the banks of the Hugli, in the city where resides the great Kali who revels in blood, night and day, day in and day out. Under the fearful auspices of the devouring Mother were assembled in their full strength the rival political parties in the country determined to engage on a war to the knife, showing no quarter, taking none. Lakhs and lakhs of people crowded at Deshbandhu Nagar to witness the Battle Royal. The combatants were ranged in serried ranks. They advanced to the tune of martial music. The rivals met. Swords were flourished. Then a crash. Something unexpected, something astounding happened. They compromised. Peace was declared amidst general rejoicings. The crowds dissolved with a sense of relief and a feeling of satisfaction. The rivals will meet again at Lahore. We shall witness another attempt at a trial of strength. But what is to happen in the year intervening?

A Pious Hope

At Calcutta was passed a pious resolution which expresses the fond hope that we shall once again get to work on the four fold constructive programme, and in the picturesque language of Deshbandhu Das, we shall gather "men, munitions and money". But the piety is that of the

incorrigible saint who hopes against hopes. The Congress expressed no interest in such tameness. We are not rash enough to venture on a prophecy. But we cannot help expressing our humble scepticism: the "one crore members, one crore wheels and one crore rupees" is a feat impossible of repetition. That event is past history, and history does not repeat itself. Mere repetition is possible only by the machine; a living organism like the Indian Nation which grows from day to day and from year to year cannot repeat its past. A craving for such repetition is a symptom of disease: it displays poverty of imagination; it displays inability to assimilate the growth. Eight years ago we succeeded in the endeavour. We enrolled a crore of names on the Congress register: then we tore up the register. We established a crore of wheels: then, we burnt them. We collected a crore of rupees; well, we spent them. How did we manage the tearing, the burning and the spending? And what was the result of our achievement? What was the lesson we learnt out of such experience? These are the elements which constitute the growth of the Nation since the days of eight years ago when the original Constructive Programme was launched. An empty call to repeat the feat without taking into account these constitutive elements betrays a want of understanding of human nature. The cry encore is never answered in real life, it is answered in the theatre where they ape life.

The Resolution

But there was a central resolution of the Congress, the resolution round which were ranged the conquering hosts of Moderates and Extremists, Constitutionalists and Non-co-operators, those who have drawn the sword for Dominion Status and those who would strike for Immediate Independence. This resolution was separated from the resolutions of pious hope. The separation is significant in spite of Gandhiji's attempt to explain it away. The central resolution is the result of a compromise between those who wait for a gesture from England and those who pretend they do not. The object of the compromise is to mark time until the gesture is made by England. The marking time must be done with bravado and without loss of prestige. Here is the text of the compromise resolution passed by the Calcutta Congress:-

"This Congress having considered the constitution recommended by the All-Parties Committee Report, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its

recommendations; and whilst adhering to the resolution relating to complete Independence passed at the Madras Congress, approves of the constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance especially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among important parties in the country.

Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, this Congress will adopt the constitution in its entirety if it is accepted by the British parliament on or before December 31, 1929, but, in the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organize non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may by decided upon.

Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of propaganda for complete Independence".

The Interpretation

And here is the interpretation of that resolution by one of its chief sponsors, Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar:-

"In the first paragraph the Congress reiterates its adherence to the goal of complete Independence and it contrasts it with the constitution recommended by the Nehru Committee. It means nothing less than complete severance of the British connection. There was no intention on the part of the Congress to go back on that. While the Delhi resolution was silent as to what was to happen in case the British Parliament accepted the Constitution, the Calcutta Congress resolution makes the situation clearer and stiffer. It sets the time-limit of one year only for the acceptance of the British Parliament. It wants the acceptance of the Constitution in its entirety. Further, the Congress does not adopt these recommendations now but waits till the British Government accepts them. It merely promises to adopt them, if the two conditions of time-limit and acceptance in entirety are fulfilled. But even the promise is ambulatory, for if the exigencies of the political situation require a reconsideration of that promise, the Congress will do so. The matter does not rest there; the Congress contemplates non-acceptance or rejection by competent authority earlier than the end of this year and in that case it will proceed without hesitation to launch a mass movement. Meanwhile, propaganda in the name of the Congress for

complete Independence is to be carried on."

The Central Note

The resolution has many interpreters. But Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar is the authorized bhashyakar (*interpreter – editors*). He took a hand in the drafting of their resolution, and probably, he hatched the interpretation before the drafting. Moreover he strikes the central note which expresses the genius of the resolution. Ambulatory, that is it, Mr. Stick-at-nothing behind the whole resolution. It is to build up and maintain his prestige that a costly show is arranged at the end of every year by a poor Nation. Is it not time that we wake up from the slumber invoked by this ambulating prodigy who drives the Nation in a vicious circle just to satisfy his perambulating proclivities and incidentally to escape from being cornered by any of his rivals in the political arsenal.

- *Revolt*, 16th January 1929

1.2 Congressmen in Madras

Independencewalla Runs Amock

Mr. S. Satyamurti, the Provincial Secretary of the Independence League, tabled a question at the Madras Legislative council which was answered on the 31st January: "Will the Hon. The Law Member be pleased to state whether it is a fact that while Mr. E.V. Ramaswami Nayakar and Mr. Surendranath Arya were allowed to hold a conference and preach against society and religion at Vellore early this month, the police and the magistracy prevented meetings being held under Congress auspices by serving orders under Section 144 of the criminal procedure code?" The spirit of the question betrays the mentality of the Indepencewalla, who far from bothering himself about measures for the securing of independence from Britain is actually intent on increasing the hold of the foreign Government on India by himself turning informer against his countrymen and instigating and assisting government prosecutions. Had Mr. Satyamurthi been a patriot he would have contented himself with entering a protest against the repressive order prohibiting the Congress meeting without going out of his way to suggest the appropriateness of adopting repressive measure against Messrs. Nayakar and Arya. But the Independencewalla thirsts for blood and he would not rest content unless the British Bureaucracy obliges him by bringing the head of his political opponent on a charger. We have here an indication of what we shall experience when India attains to Independence and Mr. Satyamurti assumes the reins of Government.

The allegation that Messrs. Nayakar and Arya preached against society and religion is grossly libelous. Mr. Nayakar is the chief of the Self-respect movement and has dedicated his life to the task of social reform and social reconstruction on a scale hitherto undreamt of in our country. Mr. Arya is a member and a responsible officer of one of the reformed Christian Churches. The charge against Messrs. Nayakar and Arya comes with ill grace from a social obscurantist who seeks to perpetuate child widows and Devadasis and a religious reactionary who raises the cry of 'religion in danger' in support of derelict religious heads whose actions were sought to be controlled by the legislature.

- *Revolt*, 6 February 1929

National Language vs. Common Language

(By Kirk)

These are days of catch phrases. Nationalism is one such and the national soldier, the future citizen of a free India is but election folder. There is a crop of movements calculated to bring freedom for our country and one such is the movement for a national language.

One does not clearly understand what is meant by the talk of a national language. Mr. C. Rajagopalachairar, the protagonist of the movement in the south, would have it as the State language for future India. He says, "The intelligentsia of India must therefore undertake the duty of carrying out the will of the people and manage central affairs as well as provincial matters." He asks, "Can the deliberations of the Central Assembly and the transactions of the high officers of state and others exercising authority in the central government be permitted to be done in English?" And in answer he says "obviously not, if we desire democracy to be true in fact as well as in form – if we do not want educated men to be appointed to places of power and influence and conduct their affairs apart from the people and the electorate". In his scheme of nationalism and democracy there is place for the mother tongues as well as for English which latter he calls the language of international commerce.

This argument is high sounding but one does not understand as to what it leads to excepting the enforcement of Hindi on South Indians. Mr. Rajagopalachariar refers to the Nehru Constitution which is vague and grotesque, complex in its provisions relating to the lingua franca. There is place for Hindi and Urdu and also English in the Nehru millennium.

Let us now consider the argument put forth in favour of a language of state, calculated to establish democracy in fact as well as in form. First of all democracy is said to be the rule by the intelligentsia. The intelligentsia everywhere and much more so in our country vigorously exploit the people in the interest of the classes to which they belong. For democracy to be real, therefore, the people at large should participate in the Government. An illiterate population is unfit for democracy. The task before the Nation-builder is therefore mass education and the eradication of illiteracy. As long as we accede the necessity for the study of three languages on the part of anyone aspiring

to participate in the government of his country you only extend the period of exploitation and unscrupulousness on the part of the intelligentsia.

If illiteracy is to be obliterated among the people the advocacy of the study of three languages is a menace. There must be one common language for the classes and the masses alike which will completely satisfy our secular needs. The problem of the multiplicity of scripts must also be tackled. There is no necessity for so many scripts while the genius of all the scripts in the country employed in uniting the different languages is the same. The scripts of all of them are unscientific. They share the complexity of the picture scripts without their art and the multiplicity of all primitive inventions. The languages have a tendency to multiply even in this age of quick locomotion and news transmission because of our devotion for the mother tongues, sister tongues, king's tongues and international tongues. In a perfect scheme of democracy therefore there is no place for so many tongues. If illiteracy is to be removed, the "Divine Nagari" and the "holy Arabic" scripts cannot be of any use. We must agree on the adoption of universal script so scientifically revised that one can learn it in a few hours time. The feat is not impossible.

We should build up a language which will be a synthesis of all the Indian languages but devoid of the confusing complexity of their grammar. As a first step we should decide on the adoption of universal script capable of writing down all the existing Indian languages. We should start and persistently push forward a movement for the attainment of common language in the near nature. The common language will be ushered in by a process of gradual evolution. No existing language however "national" its pretensions, will be suitable as the common language for the future.

– *Revolt*, 13 February 1929

Week by Week

(By Spectator)

It is certain that whatever may have been their experience elsewhere, the Simon Commission are going to have a hearty welcome in Madras. Almost all the prominent political organizations in the city are busy making preparations at present to offer a warm reception to the Commission on their arrival on the 18th instant. It is true of course, that there are a few Congressmen intent on creating trouble of some kind or other with a view to make it appear that they are the only pebbles in the beach to a be reckoned with and that they have the whole province behind their back. But even these tub thumpers seem to be none too keen on the mission they profess so much fervour about. Already the air is thick with rumors that they have decided not to precipitate a hartal – they will be content, it is said, if a few urchins could be got hold of to "demonstrate" on the occasion.

No doubt the Mussolini of Mylapore has excused himself from being present in the assembly on the occasion of the vote on the Public Safety Bill on the ground that his presence in the City at present is essential in the interests of the organization of a thorough boycott of the Commission (1). But those who are in the know about the doings of the local Congress clique are emphatic in their assertion that even the great Sriman is not without his misgivings about the prospect ahead. He is acutely aware, in the first place, of the fact that, apart from a handful of people, the rest of the citizens are at one in their desire to maintain the tradition of dignity and hospitality to the stranger when the Simonites arrive; and, secondly, he is also aware that, circumstances being what they are, it is quite likely that any excessive zeal on the part of himself and his followers for black flag processions and unruly demonstrations might possibly result in a repetition of the "Iron Bridge history" (2) of last year. However, we shall wait and see how things will pan out in the end.

In this connection it is worthy of note that in spite of Messrs. Satyamurti and Company, the Madras Corporation has decided on Simon Commission. This decision was arrived at by a clear majority of votes, and to a reader of the proceedings of the debate in the Council it is clear that, were it not for some unexpected happenings, the majority would have been even greater. In the first place, some of the

requisitionists for the special meeting turned tail at the last moment, possibly because of the "tremendous pressure" brought to bear upon them by the Swarajists. Secondly, some of the Europeans, taking the cue from Mr. A. A. Hayles of the "Madras Mail", thought it was the better part of valour to stay away from the Corporation at the time of voting instead of participating in it. It is notorious that Mr. Hayles has for a long time past been posing himself as a great authority of civic affairs, and from the day the Justice Party came back into power in the Corporation, he has been feeling a certain amount of uneasiness and and discomfort augmented, no doubt, by the notorious fact that, on the two occasions he interested himself actively in the election of the president, the horses he backed never reached anywhere near the winning post.

However, it is something to find that Mr. Reid one of the European members of the Corporation regards it as a "curious mentality" on the part of a European to dissuade his kith and kin from doing honour to a body of Englishmen who have come to India on a mission of great importance. For the moment, Mr. Hayles has become a favourite in Swarajist circle, because of his dubious politics but time alone can show how long the present European-cum-Swarajist game of tiger-hunting will go on in an amicable fashion.

Another equally absorbing topic of discussion at the present moment is the provincial Self-Respect Conference which is going to meet at Chingleput on the 17th and 18th instants. That the Conference is going to be a tremendous success goes without saying. Its organizers are sparing neither money nor energy so that the Conference may be made a memorable one. The present writer had an opportunity of witnessing the preparations on a very huge scale that are now going on at Chingleput for the holding of the Conference, and he is convinced that the impression of everyone who will be attending the session will necessarily be one of thankfulness and gratitude to the organizers for having given them the privilege of attending a function which is bound to be epoch-making both from the point of view of spectacular magnificence and that of public utility.

-*Revolt*, 13th February 1929

Is this Nationalism?

(by Eaviyar) (3)

For thousands of years India's wealth has been undermined by the incomers in the name of religion, god, festivals, caste, ceremonials, etc. And as a result, people have been plunged into the mire of ignorance and illiteracy. Similarly, in recent years, in the political arena a section of the people are wasting our wealth and are acting as spies to foreigners and are playing havoc on the country in the name of Nationalism, Swaraj, Independence, etc. People are not able to realize this sort of sham. For in our country, however educated a man is, his reasoning faculty is curbed by his religion and his powers of discrimination are arrested. Similarly powers of discretion cease to function in respect of politics. Just as a set of people meet their selfish ends in the name of religion; there are also those that call themselves educated having similar interests in politics. This conclave of people has enshrouded humanity in ignorance which has ultimately brought the country to a calamitous condition. Since 40 or 50 years, the sham of politics has wrought countless wrongs to our country and kept the mass ever under its thumb without allowing it a single chance to raise its head. The selfishness of the educated class and the misguided blind belief resulting from the ignorance of the uneducated people keep us away from search after truth and justice.

Let us examine the present condition of politics in our country. Today in the political world there are two sets of people that are making much noise, viz the Congressmen and the Independents. What are their qualifications? Let us examine their "deeds" and "sacrifices" in the name of politics. On the Congress platform they would declare that the "Satanic" British Government should be swept off at once. People would also applaud them. But their sons, brothers and relations would be earning Rs. 500, 1000, 2000 & 3000 a month as Munsiffs and Judges under the same Government. Their heroic declarations would but serve to strengthen the positions of their relations in the various professions and yet they will be masquerading in the name of the country.

The Secretary of the Congress, Mr. Rangasami Iyengar would roar, "we must obstruct the Government from functioning and beard the lion in its own den." But his brother would crawl into the den of

Government, bow low to the Britisher, lick at his feet and hold the banner of the Bureaucracy. Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar. To prove his 'patriotism' the Independent-wallah would ask others to do away with the British connection, but, every morning he would unconsciously find himself at the feet of the judges addressing the representatives of the "satanic" government as "Your Lordship, Your Honour" etc. and would coolly pocket a few thousands. His creed of independence would also help him in securing fresh appointments for his kith and kin.

And there are other political magnates who are said to be intoxicated with too much of patriotism. Messrs. Srinivasa Sastri, T. Rangachari, Mani Iyer, V. Krishnasami Iyer, C. P. Ramasami Iyer, C. Vijayaraghavachari are names to be conjured with. And surely their sons, nephews, brothers, brothers-in-law and other relations are reaping the fruits of these "patriotic" brains. Those that are unfit for Government services and those that are retired from service have come out as patriots, but their sons, and relations are in the service of the "Satanic" Government.

After the advent of the Congress, i.e., since 30 to 40 years, the Brahmins have managed to enter into almost all branches of Government services. And so it is proof positive that national organization, the Congress has done nothing but the obtaining of 97% of the appointments to the Brahmins who are but 3% of the entire population.

Year after year resolutions are passed in the Congress demanding provincial autonomy and reforms in the machinery of Government. But the number of new appointments is increasing in geometrical progression resulting in the consequent increase in taxation. The Government are forced to throw loaves and fishes of office to these patriots and if they refuse to do this, there is a big agitation brought about in the name of the illiterate masses. The Government finds itself on a bed of roses day by day, by providing appointments for such agitators and their kith and kin. It is why Government also are helping the Congress. The Britishers are here to earn and to enjoy. And there are the Congressmen to secure comforts and conveniences for the Britishers.

A number of political parties have sprung up within the Congress itself, as Independence, Swarajya, Liberal, Home Rule etc. Each of them sing the same chorus of "amelioration of the distressed." Create new appointments, new committees, new delegate-ships to foreign

countries and the like. The ultimate result is a heavy taxation on the people and the consequential impoverishment of the nation. For example, today we find thrice the number of officers in each of the departments of Government service as that before the advent of the Congress. Has the population increased thrice after the Congress?

They ask people not to learn English since it is a foreign tongue. But they educate their children in English schools with the help of their earnings got from us by such fraudulent methods as festivals, ceremonials and other rites. And today we find the Brahmins who were fed in Chatrams (*charity and rest houses – editors*) employed as proprietors, and those who studied under municipal lanterns occupying all places in Government services. And this is done again in the name of nationalism.

Before the advent of the Congress i.e. before the Government bribed the monopolist community with appointments, the revenue of our country was about 25 to 30 crores. As a result of the work of the Congress for these 40 years and more, 140 to 150 crores are being collected from us in the shape of taxes. The aggrieved party is not the Independence-wallahs who were once beggars (for that is the verdict of history) but we the agriculturists, traders and labourers. And the result is there is an increasing flow in the emigration of labourers to foreign countries. Yet nationalism is masquerading the land.

But when we press for communal representation, there is the cry from the so-called nationalists that it is an obstacle to national progress, and we are labeled as "unpatriotic". Then, there is no longer the usual pressure for fresh appointments. We are styled as "Brahmin-haters" and the "nationalists" use this weapon as one of their election tactics when they came to the people with their fire-eating promises. This is again done in the name of patriotism.

The present ministers of our province are condemned, and especially Mr. S. Muthiah Mudaliar is decried as a "traitor." Where does the truth lie? The Congress resolution ran that no support should be given to ministers and that diarchy should be broken to pieces. But soon after the last elections, was it not these Congress men that helped Dr. Subbaroyan in the formation of the ministry? (4) And is it not an open secret that Messrs. Ranganadha Mudaliar and Arogyasami Mudaliar were chosen as ministers on their promise to play to the tunes of the Congressmen? Then Mr. Muthiah Mudaliar fought the Congress

members in the provincial and the All-India Congress Committees. But he was not only denied a chance to speak in the All-India Congress Committee, but the "nationalists" congratulated themselves on their achievement in forming a Ministry from other than the Justice Party. Can any one with Non-brahmin blood in his veins continue in the Congress any more? And so Mr. Mudaliar was obliged to resign his seat on the Congress Committee, form a separate party, accept a ministry and do what he can to the cause of the Non-brahmins. What the previous ministry for a period of 7 years was not able to achieve, Mr. Mudaliar achieved within a few months after the acceptance of his office (5). It is he that was responsible for doing the pioneer work in securing communal representation in the service. That is why the Brahmins denounce Mr. Mudaliar and also induce others to do the same. Wherever their interest is affected they appear in their masks of patriotism and stand before the masses, in the name of nationalism. Such a Congress we do not want; such a patriotism we do not require. Come what may, let us not be perturbed by such terms as "traitor to the Congressmen" and "traitor to the country". In the coming elections, of course, the Brahmins would move heaven and earth to defeat Mr. Mudaliar. They would even employ agents to dupe the people. If it is a fact that they want to end diarchy, was it not the Congress Party that formed the ministry soon after the last elections? When we say this, we are traitors to the Congress!

Then comes the questions of the Simon Commission. During the last elections, the Congress Candidates promised to co-operate with the Simon Commission and canvassed votes only on that condition. But when they found that the Brahmins and their satellites had no place in it, they have raised the "Boycott" cry. If the members are sincere they should resign their seats in the Council and seek re-election on the boycott ticket. We hope the "Nationalists" would take up this challenge.

***Revolt*, 27 March 1929**

The Coming Elections

The elections are fast approaching and preparations are rapidly in the making. All that is necessary for electioneering propaganda is being cautiously prepared by individuals as well as political parties. So far as our province is concerned the elections will have its usual thunders, lightnings, effusions, vapourings and manoeuvres. In other countries at the time of the elections the contesting parties or candidates place before their electorate their qualifications and the work they turned out in the past. Personalities or sanctity of party names do not play any part, and in fact, cannot play any part also. Quibblings, interpretations and fire-eating promises do not help the candidates of other countries, as they do in our province.

The samples of such effusions and manouevres are already begun. The Swarajists of Madras who are famous for their unadulterated patriotism, their indomitable courage, their bearding the bureaucratic lion in its own den, have begun their vicious propaganda. They know full well that the cries of "Vandemataram" and "Allah-ho-Akbar" will no longer help them. Even as the Vedic hymns have lost their supernatural powers of bringing down rain at will and cursing the enemies, these two *mantrams* of Bharatamatha have, even before the last elections, lost their power of securing single votes. The Swarajists, who are past masters in the art of deluding the public, played their game at the head of the inevitable Mussolini of Mylapore in the name of Mr. Gandhi. It was at the last elections, that "Gandhi-ki-jai" was utilized as a successful weapon on the election field. And the years that followed were not so happy. Gandhi came to be regarded only as the name of an individual, and not a qualification for the candidates. The Swarajists by and by came to realize how the time has come to prove their past history to be nothing but a camouflage.

Now that the elections are drawing nearer, the Independents in collaboration with the Swarajists, are trying fresh attempts to succeed, not in the despised "job-hunting but in "obstructing the Government within its four walls". Some of the erstwhile Congresswallahs are already at the game of forming a National party with no objections to office while admitting that Dyarchy is a failure and must be ended.

The Swarajist Deputy leader has already prepared the ground for "office". Sriman Srinivasa Iyengar, inspite of his bragging patriotism is an Iyengar at heart. The history of his support to the Independent

binamy ministry and his followers bid for office is fresh in the memory of his chelas who know his acclamations for what they are worth. "Job hunting" is a slogan to work the public against the Justice party. "Independence" is an election stunt in which neither the leader of the party nor his followers believe. What about the obstruction tactics of the Swarajists, their national demands, boycotts and what not? What was the result of the national demand? A grand walk out, and a grander entry into the council halls. What about the boycotts? "Simon-go back" was the cry intended for the public but the Nehru Constitution was for the Commission's perusal.

This is the past history of the Swarajists' fury, red in tooth and claw. They succeeded in their nefarious campaign so far but they can never do so hereafter. Their Congress is up again with the old game. Boycott of foreign cloth, prohibtion of drinks and the removal of untouchability are the three items on the Congress programme. Burning of foreign cloth has had its laudable career and at Calcutta was performed the cremation of the programme by the Mahatma himself with the dakshina of a rupee. None need be serious about the untouchability programme since the originators themselves know that it is a thing which won't help them in their game. As for prohibition, the Chota Gandhi is up in arms against the evil. "Messages" are being manufactured from London in support of his programme. The very leader who stopped picketing of liquor shops at Madura after a few scores of volunteers had been clapped in prison and in order to appease his followers, invented the "Nagpur flag" while Jabalpore-flag fight started by Mrs. Sarojini Devi was ignored, is now seriously bent upon his prohibition programme. The readers are aware that he was likewise serious about it a few months before the last elections.

The future is yet hopeful for the Swarajist election programme. Mr. Gandhi is touring Andhra desa and the echo of his propaganda is likely to be heard in Tamilnad also. The "pussy foot" of Tiruchengode (6) is a sly cat indeed! Mr. Bajaj and the Hindi Nationalism have had their sojourn in Tamil nad. A few thousands of rupees are at their disposal. The Leader and the Secretary of the Hindi movement are those who won't commit the folly of knowing the national language. Good election agents are they!.

All these preparations for the forthcoming elections may not stand in good stead as far as Tamil Nad is concerned. The Swarajist vandalism

and the Congress hoodwinking are spent bullets, but the Swarjists brain is resourceful. "Religion in danger" is the slogan of Neo nationalism. The infidels must be impaled, the Self-respectors and the Justicites. The Pandits with their passion of Gnanasambanda (7) fresh with the blood stains of the Jains are up in arms against the infidels. The Council Swarga shall not accommodate the infidels. A few years ago, when the Endowments Act (8) was on the anvil, the Swarajists raised a hue and cry but they were then mere novices in this trade of religion. Unaided and unsupported they couldn't succeed. Now there are pandits in plenty who are prepared to stand by them. They are now adepts in the art of fraud and camouflage. Congress, it may be argued, has nothing to do with gods and godliness. But the lawyer brain must certainly have an explanation which is not vouchsafed to the commonsensed man. "Patrotism is Godliness" is the new interpretation of Congress nationalism.

So we have the new code of Samuel Johnson, "God-head is the last resort of a scoundrel." The Swarajists are free to go about bragging unchecked, and hoodwinking the public into the belief that the Justicites and the Self-respectors are Atheists. Gods must be saved, and the Justicites must be driven out of the Council. The people's passion for god must be exploited and this is best done through the "gods", "Vote for the Swarajists and save your gods" is to be the election cry hereafter. Indeed the gods on earth, the "bhoosuras" hope to attract devotees from the "Foot-born slaves". Swaraj ki jai. But alas, the Swarajist is so blind that he can never see that there is no dearth for thinking men in the country even in the age of Swarajism.

- *Revolt*, 24 April 1929

Self-Respect Movement will and must triumph

(Mr.R.S.writes in the Sunday Times)

You cannot put down the Self Respect movement by mere abuse. In fact, I make bold to assert that it can end only in triumph. And it must win; for its defeat will mean a severe set back to the National movement.

Perhaps you laugh and even pity me for this declaration; but if you are a sincere well wisher of Mother India it is your duty to see that the Self-Respect movement triumphs.

In Congress Camp

No thinking Indian can question the need for it. Let me explain how I became a convert to it – not now but twelve years ago.

As a Congress delegate I went to Lucknow in December 1910. There two compartments had been put up in the same hall to serve meals for delegates. My Brahmin friends had their food first and then came our turn! Naturally we had to get on with the remains. Why should that be? When there are two separate rooms, why should they not have served us the meals at the same time?

A revolting experience

On the second day, we had a most horrible experience. The leaves on which the Brahmins ate their meals had been heaped up in our room. They were giving out a stench and the liquid from them had penetrated almost the entire surface. In those impossibly dirty surroundings, we were asked to eat.

Who will not revolt at such monstrous treatment and that in the Congress camp itself?

Needless to say, we left it in a body and thereafter took our food in a hotel though we had paid at the camp for the day's meals.

Resolved to keep out

Some of my Non Brahmin friends, the late Mr. Somasundaram Pillai in particular were so shocked at that experience that they kept out of the Congress from that day. They did not attend even the Lucknow Session itself.

Will you tolerate such treatment? And is it not being continued to this

day? Strange though it may seem, it is not reserved to us who are grouped, of course wrongly, as Brahmin haters. Take for instance the experience of a non Brahmin critic of the Self Respect movement like Mr. T.V. Kalyanasundra Mudaliar.

Insulting hosts

He was once invited to a Brahmin house for meals; and the host would not take a refusal. What was the outcome? This "Educated gentleman" and Congressman, first went to the kitchen and had a sumptuous dinner; and then after he had partaken of even tamboolam, he asked Mr. T.V.K. to have his food outside; and the utmost that he conceded to him was that if T.V.K. was not accustomed to take his leaf and smear cow-dung, the servant woman would do it!

Why should our Brahmin friends force such insults on us? They invite us to dinner they get offended if we refuse to come and when we go, such is the treatment they offer. Yet these are the very people who throw up their hands in horror at the Self-Respect movement.

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929

North Indian Patriots and South Indian Brahmins

(Mr.P. Chidambaram Pillai, B.A., B.L.)

For quite a long time, till very recently as recently, as fifteen years ago, Madras was known as the "benighted" Presidency; politically and socially, it had gathered such an odorous reputation for obscurantism, servility, double dealing, tall talk and empty vapourings that all patriots severely left alone the Madras presidency.

It was Mrs. Besant at first, and later Mahatmaji who "discovered" the Madras Brahmin and "boosted" him up in Indian politics. Both these giants later on found that they had caught a veritable Tartar in the Madras Brahmin. The Madras Brahmin has been their evil genius. Mrs. Besant was at one time riding the political winds with her Home Rule movement. But so much has been written about her by the late Dr. T.M. Nair, the great Non Brahmin leader that she herself has complained bitterly about the Non-Brahmins of Madras.

So we may leave that lady alone to her Brahmin admirers.

As regards Mahatmaji, when he took up Indian politics after his

permanent return from South Africa, the late G.K. Gokhale felt considerable diffidence about his political capacity. Mrs. Besant called him an "infant" in politics. He has been that ever since.

In the last analysis it will be found that if Mahatmaji turns to be such an unexpected failure, it is all one to the Madras Brahmin crossing his path. It ever was a bad omen. In South Africa, it was the Madrasi Non Brahmin who furnished him with an opportunity to put his Tolstoyan theories into practice. On his return to India, especially during his last tours in the South, he forgot all about the Non-Brahmin and the stuff of which he is made. He became a regularized Sankaracharya, as Mr. E.V.Ramasami put it; his *darshan* was denied to Non Brahmins; it was a pontifical affair, ably stage managed by Brahmins; his head was in the clouds of Gita and Varnashrama Dharma. It is ever so with a Non Brahmin when he achieves eminence. Sabarmathi became the stronghold of Varnashrama Dharma. Gita has been the undoing of Mahatmaji. One even suspects whether he is even aware of the intensity of the Non-Brahmin feeling against him. He does not read newspapers and still he wants to lead the public.

But the Madras Brahmin has been astute enough to use him for all his purposes. He was utilized to give publicity to a Brahmin newspaper of Madras and a Brahmin doctor; his name was dragged in during the last elections; his prestige was employed to build up *oottuprahs* or work houses for Brahmins out of Khadi, out of funds furnished by the starving millions of the south (*oottuprahs were legion in the Travancore state and meant to feed Brahmins – editors*); he was caught hold of to advertise a Madras Brahmin as the Agent to South Africa; he, quite unnecessarily, insulted the untouchables and the depressed classes of Madras by his predeluvian theories of Varanashrama Dharma. And today he stands a spent force in Indian politics; an extinct volcano, unable to command a shred of sympathy from the Non Brahmin youths of the South or from anywhere. He has become Mrs. Besant No.2, an old religious fossil, unprogressive, halting, given to more whims and caprices than even the venerable old lady – the most tragic figure today in India.

How far, blindfold, he is being led by the Madras Brahmin will be evident from the ultimatum issued recently by the Mahatma in connection with Hindi propaganda in the South. This is in effect from what he has said: "If Madras does not take to Hindi, then Madras will be left alone in the Swaraj to come." That is one thing, but his lieutenants were busy saying that as Brahmins got jobs in Government

service because they took first to English education and Non Brahmins had then lagged behind, similarly it was said, if Non Brahmins were lukewarm in taking up Hindi, then they should not complain later on if Brahmins ousted them from prominent places in the coming Swaraj. Both of them were rubbing the Non Brahmin the wrong way up: the one with a set purpose and the other unwittingly without knowing and without caring to know what the situation was like. The whole of South India would be wearing Khadi and speaking Hindi to please Mahatmaji if for no other reason, if only he would keep the Madras Brahmin and his Varnashrama Dharma out of it; he could not for his life, for his new fangled spiritual life, do it, and hence the tragedy. His Varnashrama Dharma has been his political ruin.

II

The late Deshabandhu Das, himself a man of mighty intellect and keen political insight fell under the spell of the Madras Brahmin and succumbed. Another political genius of the north, the late Mr. G.K. Gokhale was enveloped by a South Indian Brahmin true to type. The so called Liberal Party is either being guided or influenced by the Madras Brahmin. Another has become a military expert on frontier defence, yet another on family limitation, some are posing as authorities on the Constitution of Indian states.

The Madras Brahmin spread his tentacles far and wide in search of power and influence. He swamped the Congress, crumpled it up: it now lies in ruins. The latest combination between Madras Brahmins and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was quite in keeping with tradition but for the fact that the young Pandit had one or two cleansing thoughts, which would not have kept the team going for long and so it did.

The young Pandit said only recently, "The Indian intelligentsia has a heavy task and many have nobly essayed it. But there are far too many whose words are louder than their acts and who seek to cover their social obscurantism by pious pharses or political extremism. *They are gradually being found out* and they must realize that political progress cannot be divorced from social and economic progress and the choice lies between progress all along the line or stagnation and reaction". The Pandit, with his clean politics, stands poles away from the Varnashrama Dharmite politician of the South. Hence the rupture. After this statement by Pandit Jawaharlal, there can be nothing doing as between himself and the reactionary Brahmin of Madras.

That is why the venerable Malaviyaji with the "pious phrases" was invited to the South by the Brahmins. While at Kottayam, among the Thiyas or Ezhavas of Travancore one of the most gifted and intelligent races in South India, though ranked by the ignorant caste Hindu among the depressed classes, the learned Pandit said, that he could find texts in the shastras which permitted temple entry to the untouchables and the depressed classes. At Madras in the midst of Brahmin Pandits, he even denied having put forward such a claim. Rather inconsistent, extremely unfortunate and quite unpleasant.

Hereafter it would be pleasanter if the northern patriot would stick to Benares to wash away his sins and gets buried or burnt on it banks. He need not think of doing it at the Cape (*Cape Comorin – editors*). That may be reserved for the sinners of the south. Even in the ocean there may not be sufficient enough receptacle to receive all the sins perpetrated in the name of caste and religion in the southern country, even in a very small portion of it.

And therefore, goodbye, my masters, and don't you come and interfere with our programme. We think of retaining our self-respect without the assistance of either North Indian Hindu Patriot or South Indian Varnashrama Dharmite, for you are one, after all. The self respect movement shall be the Ulster of Varnashrama Dharma Swaraj. Our slogan will be the old one. "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right"

- *Revolt*, 23 June 1929

Notes to 1.2

1. The reference here is to S.Srinivasa Iyengar, former Advocate-General of the Madras Presidency and a prominent Brahmin Congressman from Madras. He went on to become a member of the Imperial Legislature, yet was also the President of both the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and the All India Congress Committee. Unsurprisingly, he was one of the champions within Congress of that party contesting elections and entering the legislature .
2. The reference is probably to a violent incident related to the Congress-led Simon Commission boycott agitations in Madras city
3. Eaviyar is EV Ramasami - this is an English transcription of his Tamil initials.
4. Following the defeat of the Justice party in the 1927 elections, and because the Congress Swarajists declined to accept office, an independent ministry was formed – comprising Dr.P.Subbaroyan, a former Justicite and two others, who owed allegiance to the Congress. Keen to keep the Justicites out of the legislature, Congress conceded support to this independent ministry. Meanwhile, Justicites resolved not to accept office until dyarchy was abolished, whereupon Congress

decided to withdraw support to the independent ministry. The two ministers who had been sworn in with Congress support resigned. However, desperate to make the reform scheme work, and with the assistance of the Justicites the governor of Madras appointed Muthiah Mudaliyar and Sethurathinam Iyer to the Cabinet. Scored by his former colleagues in the Congress, Muthiah Mudaliar nevertheless went on to adopt the Justicite line in politics and supported the Non-brahmin cause.

5. Muthiah Mudaliyar was instrumental in implementing the all-important Communal Government orders that enabled reservation of government jobs for Non-brahmins. The GOs were originally passed by the Justice Party ministry in 1921.

6. The reference here is to C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) who had established a Gandhian ashram near Tiruchengode town. (Rajaji was also known as the Chota Gandhi.)

7. Gnanasambanda was one the best-known of the 63 Tamil Saivite saints. He was opposed to Jains and Jainism in the Tamil country and it is said that he was responsible them being impaled in public.

8. The Hindu Religious Endowment Act was enacted by the first Justice Ministry in Madras – the act enabled greater state control and regulation of temple affaris and brought important Hindu temples under the direct administration of Government.

1.3 Congress Conservatism

The New Daniel

It has seldom been our lot to come across an individual more perverse-minded and incorrigible than Mr. Vallabahai Patel. We had some hope at first that in spite of all the arrant nonsense he talked at Vedaranyam about the Non-Brahmin movement he would discover his mistake as he proceeded on his tour in the province and came into touch with the realities of the situation. But we now realize that we had built our hope on a wrong estimate of the mentality of the Sirdhar. Not only is he, wholly incapable of seeing things as they are, he is so much under the maya of the monopolist gang that he has neither the sense to think out things for himself nor the self-respect to assert himself and stand out against the insidious hypnotism of the patrons who lead him by the nose. To make matters worse, he has evidently an insatiable craving for cheap applause and incense things (sic) which the monopolist press is only too willing to accord in full measure to those who would play up to its tunes. Naturally, the great Sirdhar of Bardoli fame has been making a series of statements in the course of his lecturing tour – statements whose falsehood and absurdity are only matched by the extreme vehemence and impudence with which they have been uttered ad-nauseum. Malice, misinformation and ignorance are at the bottom of many of these effusions and so it is safe to predict, that except himself no one is going to be worse off for them.

In a previous issue we have dealt with some of these "Patelisms" and shown to our readers what a downright dupe or a consummate ignoramus their author is. We have no intention of going over the same ground now. We shall refer today only to a few more of the series which have since been paraded for the edification of a supposedly stupid public. Mr. Patel says with an air of cocksureness so characteristic of a swollen-headed monomaniac that the authors of the self- respect movement in this province have no other object but to snatch at power and office in the gift of the bureaucracy. A man who talks in this vein can hardly be taken seriously for even an ordinary school boy knows that loaves and fishes of office are the last thing aimed at by the earnest souls who in the name of the Self-respect movement are carrying on a relentless crusade against those manifold social and religious evils which

are sapping the vitality of the race and retarding the progress of the country.

If Mr. Patel had but cared to read the literature on the subject or if he had but sought an opportunity to come into contact with any of the protagonists of the movement instead of meekly swallowing all the poisonous vapourings of his "spotless friends", he could have easily understood that the bureaucrats and their favors had only as much to do with the movement, as say the Bardoli satyagraha had had to do with the recent outbreak of an undiagnosable disease in Bombay. However knowing as we do the personalities in the green-room who sent him tutored on to the stage, we have little reason to be annoyed or displeased with the performance of the Sirdhar.

Nor is it a matter for surprise that Mr. Patel should have rhapsodized so much over the khadi and the Hindi Prachar movements. The khadi movement supplies the living for many an unemployed youth of the monopolist community and unless the waning enthusiasm is somehow quickened up the Acharyas and Iyengars behind Mr. Patel will soon find their occupation gone. As a test of the truth of what we have said, will Mr. Patel call for a statement regarding the number of employees in the khadi service, to which community each belongs, their salaries etc.? When a statement of that kind is forthcoming even the incorrigible Patel will be forced to confess that his friends are not so spotless after all as he had been led to imagine and that it is not altogether a commendable spirit of helping the poor and serving the interest of the nation that has led so many of these "selfless workers" to interest themselves in that organization.

So also is the case with the Hindi Prachar stunt. Has Mr. Patel, we ask, ever stepped into the premises of the head office of the Prachar in Madras? Has he noticed how many clerks are there in the office, what salary each is being paid and what relation each bears to the other? We have reliable information to the effect that practically all the members of the staff are in inter-related in a family way and that some members at any rate have only as much of ability and qualification as to condemn them forever in this competitive world to be unemployed but for the filial pull of the chief of that office. Further how the Prachar movement is abused will be clear if some investigation is made as to how the Bharathi Prachuralaya is being worked. Is it not true that both the institutions are housed in the same building and that the same staff

does the work of both?

Be that as it may the time is fast approaching when it will be altogether impossible for scandals of this type to be hushed up. Today the "spotless Brahmins" may get hold of an invertebrate Patel to beat the drum for them and cry down the Non Brahmins but it will not be long before the realization dawns that tactics of this kind are of no avail. In the meantime let us congratulate the "spotless saint of Salem" on his great success in having got hold of a 'nam-key-waste' Non Brahmin to advertise him throughout the length and breadth of the province (1). And let us also hope that the rumour will prove well founded that on his return to Madras *purnakumbhams* and *aarthies (symbols of a ceremonial welcome – editors)* will be presented by the local Brahmins to the New Daniel from Gujarat who at their instance and under their inspiration has undertaken the arduous journey to this distant province to pronounce a judgment on the Non Brahmin movement so agreeable to them.

- *Revolt*, 15 September 1929

More about Patel's Tour

(Culled and Pulled)

We have repeatedly adverted to the inanities which Mr. Patel has indulged in with reference to the Brahmin Non-brahmin problem in this province, his cheap sneers and his thoughtless remarks regarding the Self-respect movement. He says that he is ashamed that the large majority of Non-brahmins should always live in fear of a small Brahmin community. Well, we are glad there is something at least of which Mr. Patel is ashamed, because we had almost come to the conclusion after reading his effusions, that Mr. Patel is one of those who can be ashamed of nothing, not even of his own ignorance. He tells the Non-brahmin youths that he will teach them the way to Self-respect. We quite agree, and it is by avoiding all that Mr. Patel stands for, and by rejecting all that he ventures to preach on public platforms, in fact by patterning themselves on a model which is the exact antithesis of Mr. Vallabhai Patel, and pursuing in their own way, the good of themselves and the good of their country. Repeated snubs, frequent protests, convincing arguments and open criticism have all gone merely to help Sirdar Patel in stiffening his views and in refusing to be corrected. At Tiruppur, where Mr. Patel indulged in most unseemly and vitriolic attacks on

the Non-brahmin movement and breathed out purely poisonous atmosphere against the Non-brahmin Newspapers and the Non-brahmin leaders, a very fair attempt was made to correct him to his face. But the critics can well despair of improving either Mr. Patel's manners or his reasoning faculties or his sense of fairness and justice. Sirdar Patel knows little of politics, less of the social customs and manners of this Presidency, least of all the men who go about with him in his triumphal processions, the "spotless Brahmins", of the "spotless" variety. A man so thoroughly inane, so jejune in his ideas, so ignorant just because he has been boomed to prominence, should not be taken too seriously. But after all Sirdar Patel is a Non-brahmin; and that one tie makes us kin even with this ignoramus. He creates in us a deep feeling of sympathy and humiliation. That there are men like Mr. Patel in Gujarat is only an additional reason why the movement should spread beyond Bombay into Gujarat. Oh for a few hours when Sirdar Patel will sit at the feet of our leaders and learn the elementary lessons of Self-respect!

– Justice

As usual the Brahmins of South India have brought another of the North Indian leaders and have utilized him to preach Brahminism. And it is no wonder that Mr. Patel has repeated, even as the gramophone does, what he has been taught by his informants. In his address at Vedaranyam, he has said that he is sorry to be told that a movement has been started in South India with the avowed object of destroying all that is good in Aryan culture. We ask, what is that which is good in Aryan culture? Is it the Chota Gandhi's tuft of hair, his "holy" thread or his *namam (mark worn on the forehead by Vaishnavites - editors)?* Is it the Puranas, Ithihasas, the Smritis and their offshoots, the temples, their festivals and the Brahmin Poojaris? Or is it the idols of these temples or the crores of rupees spent on their behalf? Is it the glorious Varnashramadharma or the 'superiority' of Sanskrit? What induced this casual visitor to the Dravidian land to assume the role of an apostle of the Aryan culture? Does he know the difference between the Aryan and Dravidian culture? Is he aware of the treatment meted out to the Dravidians by the so-called Aryans? Is the advocacy of Aryan culture a part of his political programme?

Was it the "communalists" or the "Aryan culture" that hindered the introduction of reforms? Did he come across anyone of the leading

Non-Brahmins of this province? Did he attempt to acquire first-hand knowledge of the tenets of the Self-respect movement? He calls the Non-Brahmin movement as job-hunting. Had he only taken the pains to know whether it is the Brahmins or the Non-Brahmins that are employed in the majority of services, he would not have dared to utter such rash and unauthentic statements. Somewhere in his Brahmin-guarded peregrinations, he has solemnly confessed his ignorance of affairs in the Tamil Nad. Then why utter such imprudent nonsense? Evidently he has devoured what was vomited by his Brahmin friends. This is another of the many incidents where the Brahmins of the Province, after finding that their underhand methods are exposed to the public, take to the last resort of bringing some of the so-called leaders from far off places and propagating Brahminism through them. But we are sure that our new guest, in spite of his Brahmin body-guards, would have learnt from the response made by the followers of the Self-respect movement that the Brahmin-Non-Brahmin problem in the South is, in its poignant differences of ideas, at least as equal in importance if not more as the Hindu-Muslim question in the North.

- Kudi Arasu

We have a misinformed and misguided guest amongst us. Mr. Patel is serenely indulged in his pleasant task of attacking the most democratic movement in the country. But recent events show that he is learning painful lessons in his sojourn. We do not resent his attacks. But what we resent is the misleading of young men and others by one who possesses the least knowledge of the situation down here in the South. "A little knowledge", said Pope, "is a dangerous thing". Never have we imagined how dangerous it is till we heard Mr. Patel. It has corrupted the mind, it has coloured the vision and it has confused the man. He says the Self-respect movement is hunting after jobs. Even our enemies in the province have at worst called us "atheists", and never, never in these five years, as "job-hunters". The tutors perhaps being led by the impression that Mr. Patel would not care very much if he is told of the "atheistic" tendency of the movement, have taken into their heads to label the protagonists as "job-hunters". And poor Patel has taken the whole at its face-value. Had he only devoted a little of his active "patriotic" service, in a hasty perusal of the resolutions passed at the Self-respect Conference, he would not have so foolishly allowed him to be carried away by the past-masters of the greenroom politicians. Unhappily, he is surrounded in an atmosphere not very wholesome to

the exercise of one's thoughtfulness and individuality. That is a mistake which all the North Indian Leaders, without any exception, are unpardonably guilty of.

- Dravidan

Miss Mayo's book was condemned by Mr. Gandhi as one written with the most superficial knowledge of India. She was abused in return, by all the burning "patriots" of the country. But now, one of these identical patriots, Mr. Patel, has grasped the affairs in South India even at the platform of the Madras Central Station! Was he shown by his body-guards, the "venerable" temples and gods which refused admission to Messrs. Gandhi and Lajpat Rai? Was he shown the sanctified streets of the *bhoosuras*, which refuse admission to six crores of people in India? Then alone will he know the objects with which the Self-respect movement was started. Till then, why not he wisely refrain from uttering words of nonsense about the most successful of the social reform movements in India?

- Nadarkula Mitran

[*We are sorry, owing to the want of space, we have not been able to publish the opinions on Mr.Patel's Tour, of other leading Non-brahmin journals, as Tamil Nadu, Kumaran, Thondan, Forward, Suyamariyathai Thondan, ThenNadu, Samadarsini, Sahodaran, Mitavadi, Tamilan, Adi Dravida Kavalan, Viswanesan, and others. We shall however, publish some of the opinions in subsequent issues. –Ed.*]

- *Revolt*, 22 September 1929

[We give below a few more of the Opinions of some of the leading Non-Brahmin journals on Mr. Patel's Tour in the Tamilnad. Our aim in publishing these extracts is to show Mr. Patel and his admirers in the North that his recent pronouncements upon the Non-Brahmin organization and the Self-respect movement have not a little aggravated the feelings of the Non-Brahmins who form the bulwark of the population. We wish Mr. M. D. who writes upon this topic in the 'Young India' understands more of his subject before he finishes his 'songs of the Sirdar's conquest' – Ed.]

Mr. Patel has indulged in violent attacks on the Self-respect movement, which is quite unworthy of any responsible individual. It is indeed a pity that the monopolists of our province have been led to the necessity of bringing down a native of Gujarat to certify them as 'spotless', 'honest' and 'good'. The Sirdar has been persuaded to vilify the self-respect

movement, the only organization that has gone deep into the minds of the masses. The Congress in the Tamilnad has only served to strengthen the hands of orthodoxy and reactionarism. Had it not been for the extremists of social reform, i.e., the Self-respecters, orthodoxy would have certainly made a greater fuss in their futile attempts to oppose Mr. Sarda's Marriage Bill. We are sure Mr. Patel is unaware of this truth. We are ashamed to know that the Sirdar has made bold to say that the Non-Brahmins in South India would not have become so learned and cultured, if there were no Brahmins. As long as a person entertains such slavish mentality it is impossible to be free from the fetters of mental subjection which has been solely responsible for the degradation of our society.

- Kumaran

Mr. Patel's remarks about the Non-Brahmin agitation in the South have impressed upon us the opinion that he has, in his anger against the existing conditions, utterly failed to take note of the real causes of the issue. We are not a little pained to hear such attacks from the Sirdar. And the more so, when we came to know of his gibes at social reform. Mr. Patel asks, "Will the fight about widow-marriage appease one's hunger?" This is too absurd a question to be expected from such a responsible person as Mr. Patel. "Appeasing one's hunger" is not the only aim of humanity. For pigs, dogs and donkeys also "appease their hunger". Mankind wants more … His careless and irresponsible remarks about the propaganda of social reform do not form part of his political programme. His taunts at the Non-Brahmin movement, as 'a job hunting one' are regarded by the masses, as a great insult. Mr. Patel has observed in his speech at Bangalore that the administration of the country would be spoiled if the Non-Brahmins were to be put at the head of affairs. We wonder how Mr. Patel's knowledge of Indian history failed to show him that the Non-Brahmins had been more used to the task of governing the country than the Brahmins. We also wonder how the Sirdar forgot the truth that the ancestors of the Brahmins were not 'rulers', but only the so-called 'sages' living by the charity of others. In short, Mr. Patel has shown his ignorance of the affairs of the society in the Tamilnadu, which we can neither excuse nor ignore.

- Tamilnadu

The South Indian Brahmins have at last thought it wise to bring a Non-Brahmin from the North and make him preach Brahminism.

They have also partly succeeded in their nefarious attempt. Ever since Mr. Vallabhai Patel set foot on the South Indian soil, a violent attack on the Non-Brahmin movement has become the burden of his song. The Sirdar implores the people not to destroy the Aryan culture. We are at a loss to know what he means by 'Aryan culture'. Is it the horse sacrifice, or the human sacrifice? Is it the Soma juice or the Powndriga yagam? Let Mr. Patel enlighten us as to what he means by the term 'Aryan culture'. But so far as the Tamilnad is concerned we would like to point out to Mr. Patel that the Tamil Country does not require 'Aryan culture' or 'Varnashram' but what it urgently needs is the immediate social regeneration of the downtrodden communities. We want not an iota of 'Aryan culture' for we had enough of it. We want worldly education and industry, equality and justice, right thinking and right knowledge. These who help towards the achievement of the latter group, we regard as our saviours. Others we regard as enemies of human progress.

- Suyamariyathai Thondan

Speaking before a Salem audience, Mr. Patel is reported to have said: "I am ignorant of the Madras situation and I can say that I am unable to understand the subtle politics here". So far as the first portion of his statement is concerned, that is a correct, accurate and undeniable version of the fact. With reference to the latter part of his statement, we have to inform Mr. Patel that it is not so much the politics of Madras that is 'subtle' as the scheming brains that have tutored him. Though he has acknowledged his error and confessed his ignorance of the affairs in the South, the Sirdar has not stopped criticising the Non-Brahmin agitation. We would advice Mr. Patel to purge his mind in the first place of all that has been told by the monopolists about the Non-Brahmin movement. Let him shake off the Sirdarism that is responsible for his blind advocacy of Aryan culture and sit humbly at the feet of the leaders of the democratic movement and learn the real spirit of democracy running through the veins of the movement. Before he chooses to advise the people of the Tamilnad, will he attempt to get a first hand knowledge of the untold sufferings that the millions are undergoing under the iron heels of orthodoxy? Till then, let him not rush in with his rash remarks about the "movement of the masses".

- Forward

- *Revolt*, 29 September 1929

Young India on the "Volcano"

The well known writer in the "Young India" who often calls himself M.D. has poured down encomiums upon a man whose head has already turned on account of the "fame thrust upon him" by peculiar circumstances. Mr. M.D. writing under the caption "From Tamil Nad," has let himself loose in unreservedly praising the Sirdar of Bardoli fame. It is nothing but an irony of circumstances that has led a person "who for the first time visits the province without Gandhiji," wield his mighty pen in writing upon the tour of another "first visitor to the province". We would not have referred to Mr. M.D's hymns of praise, had it not been for the pleasure that he seems to take in attacking the Non-brahmin movement in general, and the Self-respect movement in particular.

Mr. M.D. exults in pointing out that the Sirdar "saw and conquered" the people. "He (Patel) went to Pudupalayam and spent a day there before the Conference." Indeed, Pudupalayam (2), is the lever of the Sirdar's movement in the South, and the centre of his recent activity. It is the place where the Sirdar had his first lessons on the affairs in South India. A *day* in Pudupalayam is enough. Is it not?

The next day emerged the great Sirdar, like a heaven-kissing mountain, with a profound knowledge of the affairs in the South. There dawned upon him the effulgent light. Pudupalayam was the *bhodi-tree* of the Bardoli hero. His programme was published in the press. The body-guards girded themselves. Flags and festoons began to fly in the air. Day and night played the drums and bands. The march began. And the Chota Gandhi took the lead. The hero got upon the platforms amidst the blessings of the face-born. There flowed from his mouth – what? Torrents of vigorous words upon the "evils of communalism". He said his "patriotic" head was reeling under the pains of the communal atmosphere. His "nationalistic" bent of mind would not tolerate the Self-respect movement. Swaraj is in sight, but the "communalists" are a hindrance. Swaraj-ki-jai! The body-guards echo the cry, with a glow of smile.

But unhappily, the wind does not blow the same way. If some of his audiences, as at Kumbakonam, Trichinopoly, Virudunagar and Tiruppur show signs of dissatisfaction or disapproval, then the Sirdar would immediately say, "What? Have you settled the Land Revenue Problem? Create Bardolis and you will have Swaraj." The tutors behind him

would cry, "Bardoli-Ki-jai!" The bands are at once set playing, and the procession starts with the hero in the centre, and the "spotless Brahmin" serenely seated by his side. And there is the inevitable M.D. to write in the *Young India* of what Mr. Patel, "saw and conquered."

Let us turn our attention to the next remark of Mr. M.D. He says, "He (Mr. Patel) did not go there (Pudupalayam) to understand the Brahman Non-brahman problem from an interested quarter, as some Non-brahman papers foolishly said, (Mark the words!) but he went to see the people among whom he has found 'work cut out' for himself." In the first place, let the writer be patient enough to be told that almost all the Non-brahmin papers in the presidency are published in the respective vernaculars of the province, of which neither the venerable writer nor his Bardoli Hero has got any idea. Then how is it, we wish to know, that the Sirdar and his worshipper pretend to know or "understand," as they put it, the Brahmin Non-Brahmin problem? Whether the Non-Brahmin papers said "foolishly" or not, it ever remains a truth that the Sirdar has erred, most egregiously erred in having blurted out some nonsense about a movement which he has the least opportunity to understand. That is a mistake which M.D. is more unpardonably guilty of.

The "volcano covered with ice", as M.D. likes to call the Victor at Bardoli, has vomited worse things when he has committed himself to the dangerous task of vilifying the Self-respect movement. The volcano has emitted not merely "burning lava" but also deadly poison which was administered by the vipers around him. "You hear of Self-respect movements," pours the volcano, "Well then I tell you, propaganda of hatred is no movement of self-respect. Any movement, that makes you out to be a backward community and therefore must be helped by favours, is no movement of self-respect but a movement of self-degradation." Evidently the volcano seems to be of a philosophical mettle. The high sounding philosophy it emits is superb as regards the magnanimity behind it.

But the economist who talks, in season and out of season, of the Land Revenue problem, which seems to be a masterpiece in his political feats ought to know that it is the unanimous decision of all economists that infant industries ought to be a protected from foreign competition. He should exercise his power of thinking and see that a similar protection to the depressed communities is also urgently needed. Just as protection is necessary until the industries of a country are competent to compete

with foreign imports, so also protection in the shape of communal representation is absolutely necessary until the depressed communities feel the competence to compete with the *foreign imports* who are enjoying the sweets of office. This elementary principle of economics is too hard to enter the Brahmin tutored brain of Mr. Patel, who proudly assumes the role of an extraordinary expert in the question of Land Revenue Settlement. That is why he unwittingly rushes with the remark, that the Self-respect movement is a job-hunting one.

If the Indian National Congress fights for National Self-respect, the Self-respect movement only fights for individual Self-respect. Which is more urgent may be a matter of difference in opinion, but it does not justify a person like Mr. Patel to utter whatever he likes of a movement which is solely and wholeheartedly devoted to the problem of social reform. Mr. M.D. or his hero talking of the Self-respect movement is just like the Sankarachari talking of the British Museum. A movement which aims at the destruction of caste in particular is bound to be "a movement of hatred" to the monopolist section. And so it is no wonder the Sirdar has repeated the same sentiment which is highly glorified by the little Boswell.

A movement which has successfully destroyed priesthood, in all its varieties, a movement which by inducing hundreds of inter-caste marriages, has dealt the final blow to the shameful system of caste, a movement which has lifted up the depressed communities, both socially and politically, a movement which has successfully stopped the increase of young widows, a movement which has brought both the sexes of humanity on the same level, a movement which is in short, striving to root out the age long evils hurled upon society in the names of god and religion – this movement is ungratefully termed by that immature thinker, as one of "self-degradation". We are painful to record that such irresponsible statements from individuals of the type of the Sirdar, are apt to be used by the monopolists to work ruin upon the dumb millions of the country. Even as Mr. Gandhi's Imaginary Varnashrama gave a standing ground for the monopolists to cruelly prey upon the masses, the recent effusions of Mr. Patel and the consequent eulogy of his Boswell are bound to work greater mischief to the cause of reform, than what they are themselves individually capable of. We are sorry to inform them, that if the Sirdar and his admirer fail to repair the mischief set afoot, they alone will be held responsible for inflicting a serious injury to the cause of Social Reconstruction in India in particular and

the progress of humanity in general.

- *Revolt*, 22 September 1929

Gandhi Jayanthi – A Humbug

(By "Self-respector")

On the 2nd instant was celebrated the 60th birthday of Mr.Gandhi. As far as the Tamilnad is concerned, the Brahmins took to it more than others. And the accounts of the celebrations were advertised in the papers with some additions and multiplications. Did the Brahmins celebrate this in token of their love, esteem and veneration for Gandhiji or did they celebrate it to show thereby their appreciation of his support to Brahminism and their superiority over others? The question needs a patient and wise thinking.

Can anyone say boldly that the South Indian Brahmins had at anytime love or veneration for Mr. Gandhi?

Mr.V.S.Srinivasa Sastri, the Brahmin who advised the Government to imprison Mr. Gandhi and who told that disloyalty would spread if he is not put in jails, and thereby got from the Government the title of "Right Honourable"; Mr.Satyamurti, the Brahmin who told that Gandhiji is unfit for politics; Mr.Srinivasa Iyengar, the Brahmin who not only said that Mr.Gandhi was a fool but advised the Government that his movement was unlawful – these Brahmins and some of their disciples were prominent in celebrating Gandhi Jayanti at Madras. In the moffussils the Brahmin lawyers, their clerks and their clients who belong to the above fraternity of "patriots" were those that took chief part in the celebration. It is amusing what reasons led this gang of "patriots" to have a great liking and veneration for Mr. Gandhi. They may be justified in celebrating the day, if they had either followed what Mr. Gandhi preached once, or if they follow at least now what he is preaching today. Without following him at any time, they have left him in the background, and are today celebrating his birthday. This is just like the attitude of the Brahmins towards Buddha. They branded him as an "atheist", condemned his precepts and destroyed his religion root and branch from our country; and have written puranas that he is an avatar of Vishnu and hence should be worshipped.

Now, we challenge anyone who can point out any single Brahmin in the Tamilnad, who sincerely follows the teachings of Mr. Gandhi. For

example, which of the Brahmins has decided to follow the advice of Mr. Gandhi that the marriageable age for girls and boys should be 18 and 24? Which of the Brahmins has attempted, is attempting or will attempt to destroy the curse or untouchability, without which Mr. Gandhi said, Swaraj is impossible? Which of the Brahmins has consented to allow all the "untouchables" into the temples as Mr. Gandhi desired? Which of the Brahmins listened to his advice that widows should be allowed to marry, and that those of the widows who remain unmarried must run away and get themselves married?

Further which of the Brahmins or the "patriots" cared to rectify Mr. Gandhi's remarks, that the Congress is a "schoolboys' play", and full independence is a "sham"? Did anyone care to destroy the temples or close them at least, which Mr. Gandhi termed as the "dens of prostitutes", and in which he said there are no gods? When Mr. Gandhi declined to accept the presidentship of the Lahore Congress saying that the Congress is not in a position to accept his mandates, whoever cared to come out of the Congress or adjust its principles according to his dictates? When Mr. Gandhi is still saying that Non-co-operation is the only means for Swaraj, which of the Brahmins has boycotted the Courts, Councils or Colleges? And yet they have come out to celebrate his birthday without the least sense of shame. A Greater humbug and hypocrisy, it is hard to imagine.

But in one way, these Brahmins are justified in celebrating his birthday. That is for Mr. Gandhi's preaching of Varnashrama in the Tamilnad, for his propaganda of the Ramayana and Bhagavat Gita and for his liberal gift of lakhs of rupees in the name of Khaddar for the Brahmins to feed upon. It is a pity that our people forget that the hundreds of Jayantis, ceremonies, festivals, celebrations and Tirunakshatrams which are in vogue today, are only indicative of the Brahmin predominance and the ignominy of the Non-brahmins. We regret to point out the truth that the Gandhi-Jayanti is also included in the above list. That is why we call it a humbug.

- *Revolt*, 13 October 1929

Notes to 1.3

1. The 'saint of Salem' is C.Rajagopalachari, and Sardar Patel, the 'nam-ke-waste' or in-name only Non-brahmin!

2 Pudupalayam, near Thiruchengode Town in Tamil Nadu was the actual site of the Gandhi Ashram established by C. Rajagopalachari.

1.4 Nationalism: Principles and Practice

Poor Mr.Nehru!

(By Politicus)

A leader who does not know his followers must necessarily come a cropper. And that is what has evidently happened in the case of Pandit Motilal Nehru. Not only has the Pandit's authority and popularity vanished all of a sudden, he is fast becoming the most hated person in the very camp of which he was the accredited leader till but a few weeks ago. To the thoughtful mind and the discerning eye, there is perhaps, nothing much to be surprised at in this unexpected turn of the wheel. In the very nature of things, there could be no permanency about the idols of the market place, for the people who crowd round and offer incense are invariably of the order who readily lend themselves to the easy sway of impulsive emotions and are subject to no influences of a sober and steadying character. In the case of the Allahabad Pandit, other factors have also been at work to oust him from the throne of grace. His Madras adherents, for instance, have for long been chafing under his yoke, not because the yoke was heavy in itself, but almost entirely because one among them was so blinded by his irrepressible self-love and conceit that he could see no reason why he should be pulling the car instead of sitting inside it. Thanks, however to the shrewdness of the other followers of the Pandit, who knew what the Iyers and Iyengars were out for and who consequently refused to play into their hands, the Pandit was able to hold his own hitherto.

But now, by a perverse irony of fate – aided in its operation, it is said, by some very clever pulling of wires from behind by Mr. Gandhi – the Pandit has rubbed almost all the sections of his followers the wrong way. He has decreed that all the members of the legislatures belonging to his school of thought should immediately tender their resignations in protest against the action of the Viceroy in extending the life of the Councils, and not only that he has also thrown out a broad hint that the wisest and the most patriotic among the Congressmen could do no better than confine themselves hereafter to constructive work from outside the Councils. Certainly people whose one ambition in life has been to hobnob with the high and mighty in the seats of authority and whose one nightmare has been to face the country, cannot be expected

to have a good word for a 'leader' who, unmindful of their feelings and susceptibilities, their hopes and fears, would throw them to the wolves – possibly to be devoured and to be heard of no morel! Of course, theoretically, every one is agreed that logic and commonsense are on the side of the Pandit's view, but what is the use of either when the one leads to self-annihilation and the other to dreadful oblivion! However, we shall wait and see how things will shape themselves in the end.

- *Revolt*, 14 July 1929

Jawaharlal a fool?

At a meeting of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee held on Saturday the 10th August, the president Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, has indulged himself in indecent language quite unworthy of the South Indian patriot of the Sriman type. We are giving below some of the Sriman's words, which the Brahmin journalism of our province has purposely omitted to publish.

He observed:

". . . I am not a communist, though I took part in the committee appointed for the Defence of the Meerut Conspiracy case. But I declared that the 'impertinent' Jawaharlal Nehru should have no connection with it. He wrote to me impertinently without having any regard for me. He is a fool. I never take any notice of such fools . . ."

The Sriman has poured similar vituperations on many an occasion like this. His favourite 'fool' was once applied to Mr. Gandhi. And now it is a pity that r. Jawaharlal has fallen a prey to the terrible curse uttered from the holy mouth of the divine Sriman. The monopolist newspapers have surely thought it wise to shield the Sriman's haughtiness by observing a serene silence over the matter. We know, Mr. Jawaharlal, whatever his political ideas may be, is not one of those orthodox elements of the monopolist clan who parade the land in the name of the Congress. We pity the Sriman's mind which loses its equilibrium on moments of rough weather in the political horizon. Poor Sriman !

- *Revolt*,18 August 1929

Mr. Gandhi's Vain Hope

Writing on the position of the depressed classes under Swaraj, Gandhiji remarks: "It is not the quantity that will count when freedom is gained. It is the determination of the few that is going to be the deciding factor". We very much doubt if Mr. Gandhi has forgotten the status of the depressed classes – why even the Non-Brahmins – under such Swaraj Governments as Nepal and Travancore. "The determination of the few" of whom Mr. Gandhi is one, was not able to gain access to the temple at Cape Comerin. Temples in Non-Swaraj (Pararaj) Governments do not refuse admission at any rate, to those who have undertaken sea voyage. He further assures that "When Swaraj is attained it will be the reformers who must have the reins of Government in their hands". Dear Gandhiji, would you kindly tell us which of the reformers would rein? Is it those of the type of Pandit Malaviya who talks of reform and yet wants to retain caste? Is it the type of the Congress reformers who proclaim reform and say they would starve for a week if they see a Brahmin and a Non-Brahmin dining together? Is it the type of the "Swarajist reformers" who roar at the Legislatures that the gods require Devadasis and that is a sin to contract post puberty marriages? Or is the type of your own good self who wants reform and yet advocates Varnashram? It is a surprise that Mr. Gandhi pretends to be unaware of the position of the depressed classes ever since the recorded history of India to the time of the Western interference. The work of the Congress in these forty years and more has not given the depressed classes anything to be sanguine about their condition under Swaraj.

- *Revolt*, 11 August 1929

The Chota Gandhi

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari in his address at the Srivilliputur Taluk Conference, has unfolded some strange and shrewd things. Speaking on the Self-respect movement, he says, "For years I have wanted to see all artificial and imaginary differences between man and man abolished and a homogeneous nation established in our land...There is no one who more earnestly wishes people to be free from superstitions than myself". Weighty words indeed! What a radical reformer Mr. C. R. has turned into! Can we imagine a greater freethinker than our Chota Gandhi? Let us see what he says further.

"We must bring about reform of customs", says the ideal reformer, "as rapidly as we can, but let us not imagine that our forefathers were one set all fools and another set all rogues. Their children could not be very wise or good if such were the case". This logic of Mr. C.R. plainly shows that he is a believer in the law of varnashram. He is of the opinion that fools and rogues cannot beget wise and good people. Apart from the loss to know why the descendants of the Rishis are reduced to the necessity of keeping coffee hotels and laundries without indulging in divine communication with the omnipotent God, as their forefathers are said to have done.

Mr. C.R. is more funny when he suggests the remedy for 'establishing a homogenous nation'. "I want every one of you who believe in God" says he, "to resolve that from this day forward, every morning, the first thing to do on waking up is to pray that hatred between caste and caste, may disappear and that in beautiful South India the atmosphere of love and patriotism may again nourish us to life. I believe in silent, fervent daily prayer. Our evils are of our own making and prayer purifies us and reaches God".

We strongly advise him to adopt the same step in his Khadi and Temperance propaganda. Let him not waste his slender frame by straining himself in composing his two lined mottos and undertaking long tours. We 'pray', meanwhile for the long life of the most radical reformer. Om! Santhi! Santhi!

- *Revolt*, 3 November 1929

Boycot the Boycotter

(By P. C. P)

Let us not Self-Respecters, fall foul of Mahatma Gandhi, when he insists that only persons having Congress mentality should have predominant representation in the forthcoming Round Table Conference. It reveals a very interesting development of his mentality and his motives.

For one thing this dramatic gesture of the Viceroy has taken the wind out of the political sails of Mahatmaji. Even though he has been protesting all along that he has become a back member in politics and must make room for younger men, as when he espoused the name of Jawaharlal Nehru to the Presidentship of the Indian National Congress,

still, in his creeping old age and in enfeebled health, and after his numerous Himalayan blunders in the past when young, still, one cannot but regret, that he has not outgrown his passion for the limelight and the mentality of the *naughty child* which characterizes the average Congressman of today.

Again, there is the observation of an Ex-president of the Indian National Congress, a very shrewd lawyer, and perhaps a very much disappointed man at the present moment: "To those who got into the Simon Boycott Omnibus, it is a relief to find some talk of a Round Table Conference which offers some salvage of personal self-respect." He is the only man who had the courage to proclaim it that in the Self-respect Movement the Madras Congresswallah was meeting his Fate.

The question is why should we Self-Respectors stand in the way of the Congressman, who with all his naughtiness, and silliness and impossible conditions is now merely attempting to save his face; why should we, Non-Brahmins, who welcomed the Simon Commission at considerable discount to our political dignity and self-respect and who have had our innings before the Statutory Commission, why should we foil the attempt of the Congressman to have the greatest possible representation at that Conference? Why not allow him the longest possible rope for committing political suicide?

If I had my way I would permit the Congressman to stew in his own juice. It would be the height of political folly in those who participated in welcoming the Simon Commission to put any spoke into the wheel of the Congressman. For one thing, the Non-Brahmins must look back. They were dubbed traitors and arch-fiends, sneered at, laughed it and wept over, by these same virtuous people, when the Non-Brahmins barely did the courteous thing in welcoming the Simon Commission.

We shall take a leaf out of the Congressman's political gospel and just turn up our nose at the Round Table Conference, if the Congressman is going to have predominant representation. We shall not, of course, be childish enough to run to black flags, caste excommunications and so forth.

What have we Self-Respectors to do with any Table in which the Congressman predominates? If the Congressman thinks that he is the only pebble on the beach or that he is some sort of Special Providence for the political future on India, let us leave him severely alone.

"And do unto others as you would be done by".

Boycott is a game at which two can play. Let not the Congressman forget that. If he gets predominance as he claims it, let us boycott that predominance. It is due to our self-respect to do it. We stood by the Statutory Commission right through and we are not going to leave it alone at this moment. We should not adopt the policy of hunting with the hounds and running with the hare. Let us leave it to the *intelligentsia,* our masters.

- *Revolt*, 24 November 1929

The Viceregal Announcement

His Excellency the Viceroy's announcement on the future of Indian Constitutional Reform has produced greater smoke than fire, from the various political leaders and constitutional brains in India. With very rare exceptions, almost all the leaders who will have "nothing short of complete independence" for India have said "amen" to the Viceroy's statement. Both the so called extremists and moderates of the political stage have unreservedly praised the dawn of the new millennium a flicker of which they seem to perceive in the Viceregal statement. As expected and foreseen by Lord Irwin, that under the present situation of the "forget-me-not" policy of the Indian National Congress, any statement of his will fetch the full support of the Indian politicians, the "leaders" and the ring-leaders of the Congress have rushed with their encomiums of the tremendous pronouncement of the Viceroy. They have dotted the 'I's and dashed the 'T's of the Viceroy's statement, with the full hope of shielding their violent and fire-eating promises that they have hitherto indulged in. The Congress at Lahore, in spite of its young, energetic president, who once would have "nothing short of Full Independence," but who has himself given his assent to the statement will have naturally to lose as much attraction as it originally intended to show.

But this much is assured, that the midnight of 31st December will not be as much ferocious as it ought to have been. Indeed, India owes a great deal to the politicians who honoured and accepted the Viceroy's statement, agreed for a Round Table Conference, and thus saved a good amount of arms and ammunition which would have been otherwise lavishly spent on the morning of 1st January 1930.

We are naturally led in this connection to say a word about the Round

Table Conference for which a predominant representation is claimed for the Congress, as being "numerically representative of the largest political group in the country." If this claim is granted for the mere choice of possessing a high-sounding name, which is most likely under the existing circumstances, we are sure, that will ring the death knell of the representation of the minority communities in our country. As it is, the Congress is made up of a network of leaders and semi-leaders who are either Varnashramites whose eyes have never seen downtrodden millions in India, or aristocrats and landlords whose heads have never known a nod towards the working classes in our country. Worst of all, there is the predominance of leaders in the Congress who coolly say that the "Sarda Bill" is not a party question. There is the Tamil Nadu Congress, which very often exerts its filthy influence over the general body, which has recently "pledged to religious neutrality" at Cuddalore. That is the "recognition of women's rights" found today in the "numerically largest representative body in India". Its attitude to problems of "untouchablity" and "Hindu-Muslim Unity" is more evident in their practical achievement than in their traditional resolutions.

Whether the Round Table Conference is going to be of any material benefit to the nation itself is a question which we leave it to the future. But we fear "the loaves and fishes of office," the nauseating smell of which very often provokes the wrath of the "patriots" and "nationalists," will soon become rich dishes to the battling boycotters of the Simon Commission.

- *Revolt*, 24 November 1929

1.5 The Political Economy of Khadi

Khaddar

(By Jeejay) (1)

Wilson's Fourteen points were unlucky for him and disastrous to the Germans who built on them (*the reference is to US President Woodrow Wilson's speech in 1918; the so-called 14 points he defined became the basis for the German surrender in World War I – editors).* Let us hope that Anil Baran Ray will have better luck with the fourteen articles of his indictment against Khaddar. But as it happens, Anil Baran Babu, has, to use an expressive vulgarism, got hold of the right end of the stick. Somebody had to speak the unvarnished and unfearing against the great superstition of Khaddar and Anil Baran Ray (Congressman from Bengal – *editors*) as proved to be that somebody. And where he has led, it is possible for other people to respond to the voice of truth with answering shouts.

Historically Khaddar is the mature and organized expression of Gandhiji's objection to machinery, an objection which he inherited from Ruskin and which he pursued to the utmost logical end with his patient, fatal, unrested lucidity. While Ruskin denounced machinery and persuaded young University men to dig with the spade, it did not prevent his living the life of his class – that of the rich English middle class. It did not do him any harm; the young men he influenced survived Ruskinism as they survived measles, calf-love and other foibles of extreme juvenility. Unfortunately, for India, Gandhiji's antipathy to machinery and modernism has resulted in the suspension of political life by some of the finest spirits in the country and in their dedication to, what I am bound to call, the superstition of Khaddar.

Mr. Ray has made out that there is no kind of future for Khaddar. As I ventured to point out a weeks ago in these columns, economically, Khaddar is an impossible proposition. For seven annas you can buy machine milled cloth which handspun and handwoven, costs over a rupee and the stuff wears betters and longer than Khaddar. Patriotism or no patriotism, you are not justified in asking the poor consumer to tax himself to the extent of nearly two hundred percent for justifying his objection to modern machinery.

Consider also the element of sweating involved in it. Mr. Ray would have it that the spinners in Pudupalayam get ten annas a month by way

of wages. This, I think, is wrong. But in any event, neither woman nor man gets more than three annas a day for working eight hours as a spinner. Three annas is a terrible figure to offer by way of wages for any human being's daily work. We know the answer that is usually made; for a woman who earns nothing, three annas is something. This is just the sweater's argument. The writer has himself seen in England, women who were making six pence a day sewing on buttons or stitching button holes. The women were doing it because they could not help it and they had nothing else to do. But nobody seriously suggested that sweating was justified because sweating was better than starvation. It was condemned for the wicked thing it was, the exploitation of the poor. At a time when the minimum wage for an Indian woman working as an unskilled labourer is six annas, it is wicked for any patriot to suggest that she had better work for three annas as a spinner. It is all very well to speak in praise of cottage industries; but if any cottage industry is going to offer less than the current wage, we can very well dispense with cottage industries.

But my most serious complaint against Khaddar is that it has paralysed some of the finest political intellects in the country. There is Gandhiji himself. They are fools who say that he is an idealist and no politician; he is a saint but that does not prevent his being the finest statesman and man of action alive. In my judgment, there are only two politicians in modern history that can be mentioned in the same breath with him. Lenin and Mussolini. But Khaddar and the spinning wheel have killed him and the service that was meant for India and humanity has been lost in the whirl of the wheel. In our own Province there is C. Rajagopalachari. What is it that the man could not have done in the field of politics if he had remained faithful to its demands and responsibilities? On the other hand he has emasculated himself and immured himself in a historical futility. There a hundred other names that flash across the mind, names and memories of loyal co-operation which make one shed bitter tears. Why do you think Shaukat Ali has gone to bits? He is a brave fighter of big battles and is like an engine that has raced itself to obstruction because there was nothing in it to be attached to. Of him and others and of several others, it may be truly said that the spinning wheel was the undoing of them without the slightest advantage to the nation.

– *Revolt*, 12 December 1928

Racy

This week 'G.R.' (2) is giving our readers a treat. 'G.R'. is a blue blooded Gandhiite. But he is in a fighting mood, and active khadi service is keeping him in good form. His attempt to give us "a hard hit" has fallen wide of the mark. But he has deigned to praise us and has made us blush. G.R. has fallen in love with 'Sak'. He is right. For 'Sak' is a fine swordsman. But his sally on communal representation has not done him or his keen sword full justice.

Our contention is that separate electorates have an equal claim to be considered along with joint electorates in any scheme of organising constituencies in our county. We did not maintain, as G.R. wrongly supposes we did, that communal electorates are the best method of electing representatives. Joint electorates are synonymous with territorial electorates. But separate electorates are not indentical with communal electorates. A communal electorate is a separate electorate. But a separate electorate need not be a communal one. We welcome communal electorates as temporary expedients for securing peace at the elections and for ensuring adequate representation to the suppressed communities so long as they remain suppressed communities so long as they remain suppressed. It is too late in the day for G.R. to paint 'red' the evils of communalism. Of course communalism ought to go, But *how* shall it? A comprehensive political gesture granting joint electorates and adult franchise to all and sundry will be a fatuous futility. Patient and laborious toil among the masses is hard to contemplate. But there is no escaping it.

G.R. has mystified us by propounding an arithmetical problem involving 'enough goondas' and 'peace loving people'. We confess our inability to see how the rule of three works out in this ease. G.R. would draw a lurid picture of the goonda innate in us as the dose of original sin. We refuse to be drawn into this crystal-gazing mediumistic trance.

But G.R. is racy. G.R. is welcome. There is work for him to do. 'Jeejay' has taken his silk hat seriously and has girded up his loins to fight Khadi. There is no cause for alarm, for 'Jeejay's armoury consists of familiar weapons: supremacy of machinery, higher cost to the consumer, lower wages, waste of man power. The implements are probably rusty, but 'Jeejay' is out for mischief, It looks as though the Khadiwalla must come out of his cloistered seclusion and fight in self defence if he

would not be taken as an old time curiosity. Will 'G.R.' pick up the gauntlet?

- *Revolt,* 12 December 1928

Khaddar

(By Jeejay)

I observe that the words I said in dispraise of khadi has roused discussion. I doubt whether there has been clear and close argument: there has been anger and warmth of feeling, a suggestion almost of sacrilege, all of which prove that such words as I ventured to utter have gone home. And in all matters of intellect and in the search after truth, there is nothing like controversy to clear things up. I for one do feel that further pursuit of the question will help.

Will Mr.Ramachander allow me a small dialectic victory to start with? The effect I noted of khaddar on the fortunes of Gandhiji, Rajagopalachari and Shaukat Ali laid hold of by him to prove that khaddar was not a futility. I did not say that khaddar was impotent in every sense; all I suggested was that economically it was a futility: as a superstition, it is very potent.

I have considered carefully and respectfully everything that my critics have said: but I am not bound to say I am not convinced. First, there is the high price of khaddar, two hundred per cent above that of mill cloth of similar quality. I am happy my figures have not been challenged; in fact they are unchallengeable. But all that Mr.Ramachander can do is to be contemptuous of percentage and talk of blood. Gandhiji and the A.I.S.A are business-like if they are nothing else. If they cultivated the same disregard of percentages as Mr.Ramachander does, khaddar will be just nowhere at all. What does redeem the A.I.S.A is its business habits and you cannot have business habits ignoring percentages and talking of blood. My simple proposition is that khaddar is economically impossible and will always remain so if the average grihasata-like consumer is asked to pay eighteen annas for the length of cloth which the haberdasher will give him for six annas if only it is not khaddar. Inspite of all talk of blood, the consumer will prefer the cheaper article and resolutely decline to subsidise the A.I.S.A.

Then there is the question of the injustice to the workers. I called it sweating and I say it is. The first fling is at me personally and suggests

that I should make it my business to give six annas a day to the khadi spinners after keeping a rupee a day for myself out of my earnings. This confusion of personal righteousness with sane economic conduct is very common. But Tolstoy found out long ago that personal righteousness would not put an end to economic injustice and sweating. If you want a more recent exposure of the fallacy, I shall refer you to an illuminating section in Bernard Shaw's "The Capitalism". It is Mr.Ramachander's business to run khaddar sensibly and without starving the wage-earners. If I point out that he can't do it and that the failure is due to no fault of his own but to the inherent economic unsoundness of the whole show, instead of judging the question on the merits, he turns round and says that I should live on a rupee a day and double the wages of his workers. I am not going to do anything of the kind. If A.I.S.A is not able to do its business without giving its laborers starvation wages, it is a public danger and the sooner it is wound up the better. Secondly, my critics are altogether mistaken in assuming that I can live on one rupee a day. For the kind of life I lead (and I assure Mr. Ramachander that it is not a lurid or extravagant one), fifty rupees a day is what I want and it is all I can do to get it.

Then there is the familiar argument. The woman who is paid three annas for eight hours labour by the A.I.S.A. is not able to make even that much elsewhere; *ergo* she must be duly thankful. In the first place, I am not sure about the fact. I do not think you get any woman to give a day's labour for an anna and a half as stated. In Madras it is eight annas and even in the districts it is six annas. I do not see why she should take to spinning if all she gets is three annas. But the crux of the matter is something else. I say no human being can get sufficient food for three annas and the sweating consists in giving the woman less than what is essentially necessary for her existence. Let not anybody think that spinning I object to; it is giving the labourer less than the living wage. And the trouble is that the making and selling of khaddar do involve the tragedy of a wage on which life cannot be maintained. I confess I have no patience when people talk about a 'social ceremony' in connection with the distribution of a wage of three annas for a full working day of eight hours. Condemn the Mill as much as you please; but they do not give three annas for a full working day.

There is one more confusion that I have space to deal with. We are told that Khaddar is to be produced in the hours of leisure and that the judgment about wages is irrelevant. This answer is based on a mistake.

I shall deal with the argument when Khaddar spun during leisure becomes a considerable enough element in the case. Today we are concerned with the A.I.S.A. The A.I.S.A is just a business association dealing with workers, spinners and weavers, sales agencies and consumers. The spinners are paid three annas and my criticism is concentrated on that fact. It is no consolation to me, it is no consolation to the spinners to be told that some day when Khaddar comes back to its pristine glory and universality, they will spin in their leisure hours and get the weaving done in the village and that they will get nothing at all for their spinning not even the miserable three annas.

The truth of the matter is that cloth can be spun and woven cheaper through the mills than by hand. The machine has beaten the handicraftsman in several things, and the manufacture of cloth happens to be one of them. Mr.Ramachander may have seen in the streets of Madras human beings pulling along cart-loads of heavy articles from the harbour to the godown. It is a painful sight and I would far rather have the goods taken along in a motor lorry; it is cleaner, is more efficient and there is more of human mercy in it. It is a similar feeling that comes over me when I think of the activities of the A.I.S.A.

- *Revolt*, 16 January 1929

Khadi Outlook

The Newspapers have it that certain young men at Trichinopoly made a public demonstration of their dissatisfaction of the working of the khadi organization by making a bonfire of their khadi. The action was thoughtless. It was calculated to rouse popular passions. It would hinder khadi work which, we trust, was not the object of the demonstrators. Khadi as an item of National economy is common ground for khadi workers and will not serve as the basis of disputes as among themselves. Khadi concerns the lives of the millions in the villages while khadi organization is the business of the few at the helm of the A.I.S.A. To visit punishment on the many for the fault committed by the few is neither just nor patriotic. We hope the example of the Trichinopoly demonstrators will not be copied by khadi wearers elsewhere.

But the Trichy event is ominous. It marks a stage in the development of the Khadi movement which it would be wise to take note of and seriously ponder over. While the patriotism of the general public is keeping up the level of production and sale of khadi, the growth of

experience and knowledge on the part of khadi workers is stimulating an attempt on their part to revaluate khadi values. The appeal to prevent the annual drain of 60 Crores of National wealth does not any longer create the stir in our heart it used to. If there is the cloth drain, there are also other drains, economic and moral, which are equally serious and claim our attention. The cloth drain, at any rate, is being systematically fought against and countered by the Indian mills while the other drains are still uncared for. The old argument against machinery as such does not any longer hold water. While exploitation by the few and the sweating of the many which are the outstanding features of mechanized industry today are strenuously combated, the struggle has to take the form of assimilation rather than of expulsion. The inhuman characteristics of the machine are slowly getting humanized. We hope for a time when conditions of service inside the mills will so improve that human nature will be tempted to work rather than keep idle. Men and women will begin the day's work inside the mill with the same exhilaration of enjoyment as when they take their turn at the dance when the tune strikes the waltz. They will handle instruments of large scale production even as they will handle tennis bats, and will derive the same experience of healthful recreation. Machinery so transformed will be a delight and will have no horrors for us. Hoping for the advent of the day of such transformation we cannot continue to sustain an antipathy for machinery as such. After all is not the Charkha also a machine? Nay, does not the *takli* impelled by the momentum of the twirling fingers, assume the shape of the monster and draw out the fibers and eat up the sliver with avidity even as the machine does? Though of diminutive size and complexity, the instruments which produce khadi are of the same hateful genus, machine.

If we do not mind the drain and if we do not object to the machine what is it which sustains our faith in khadi? Frankly, it is the personal equation. Foreign cloth is hateful to us because it symbolizes the foreign exploitation of India's wants. It displays callousness to the problem of Indian unemployment that wounds our sense of Self-respect. Foreign cloth is red with the blood of the millions who die of starvation in our villages. The Indian Mill cloth is equally distasteful because it is an emblem of sweated labour. It multiplies the idle rich and displays an indifference to the sufferings of the masses. It outrages our sense of economic justice. Indian Mill cloth is red with the blood of thousands who die in the streets of our cities. Khadi is welcome because, it implies

no harm or injustice to anyone else. It is not a super-imposition. It preserves our Self-respect. It is our own handiwork and symbolizes our ability for national self-reliance. The labour involved is essentially voluntary. It is the harbinger of Swaraj. Khadi is not a piece of cloth. Khadi is an idea, capable of infinite expansion and infinite application. That khadi is now the product of the Charkha is but a historical accident due to the limitations of knowledge and of resources pertaining to the age and to the people concerned. In a different age or for a different people khadi will have a different manifestation. Under the ideal conditions we described above, of the prevalence of transformed machinery devoid of its present horrors we can well conceive of khadi being a Mill product. In an age when unemployment, sweating and starvation are unknown, we can afford to confine the hand spinner in a lunatic asylum and to consign the Charkha to a museum. Thus conceived, khadi is but part of a much wider movement for the assertion of the fundamentals of life. It is the expression, on the economic side, of an awakening to the full implications of human rights and human duties. Today therefore we are unable to have a clearer perspective of khadi in its full setting than we had in the earlier days of the movement. If we now find limitations to khadi work, we also realize in a fuller measure the implications and the details of the khadi activity. This necessitates a change of perspective and an adaptation of our methods to meet the new situation. Our responsibilities have, as a result, increased in that there is now an extra need for us to keep vigilant and take the bend at the proper angle. We should restrain haste if we would avoid a crash. The Trichy demonstration is just the wrong way of bringing about the change. It would have served its purpose if we take it as a warning to increase our vigil.

- *Revolt*, 6 February 1929

Fraud, the finest of fine arts

(By* Kirk*)

Mr. Gandhi is no more the farmer and weaver of old. The Calcutta incident has fired in him the spirit of a barrister. Setting fire to the foreign cloth, in spite of the police order, is not civil disobedience according to him. Neither is it a defiance of authority. It is a test case, a question of law. Whether a park is in a highway or not is a question of great national importance. That certainly requires immediate solution,

at least before the declaration of independence on the august morning of the coming New Year's Day. The magistrate has fined Mr. Gandhi a Rupee and the question is yet to be settled in the highest law court of the land. Bravo, Gandhi!

But why should you gag the poor lawyer who paid the fine imposed upon you? It is true you are a pauper and can't pay a fine of one Rupee. That is why you are in loin-cloth. You have discarded your *Kurtha* and have substituted it with a *Chaddar*. But is not the fine imposed upon you a national dishonor? The lawyer is probably a well-meaning patriot who wants to avert a national dishonour. Your body, as you have often said, is a national trust, though your barrister conscience is in the keeping of the barrister Sen Gupta. If the nation can find for you Dodge cars and comfortable Railway conveyance, and to defray these expenses, there can be donors who can be hailed as nation's best friends. Why should the lawyer who paid the fine imposed on be blackmailed? This is Gandhian comedy.

The story of his South Indian counterpart, Mr. Rajagopalachari nicknamed Chota Gandhi beats the short stories of his own that bristle in the columns of *Young India*. Famine is rife in the south. Men and women in thousands are emigrating from the villages to far off countries. A few *Pavayeess* and *Marathals* (*generic names of rural Tamil women – editors*) are alone left behind, because they have either their old husbands or helpless off-springs to look to. They are basking in the sunshine of an anna per day vouchsafed to them through the Khadi and Famine Relief which in reality is Brahmin Relief. The Acharya (*C. Rajagopalachari – editors*) and a host of his Brahmin colleagues are the people's demi-gods. The Acharya is the Jehovah of the old spinsters. It is no wonder then that the old democratic Spinners' Association has undergone a silent transformation and the infallible Acharya and a few of his adherents are life trustees of the Spinners' Association, in pursuance of a scheme drafted by the Acharya himself.

Khadi work has got an art about it, which the Acharya has suddenly discovered. "Wells have all dried too", he says, "but the patient women by a dint of miracle fill up their water-pots from the dry wells". This, he calls, "the fine art of filling up the water-pots". The angry gods of the Pudpupalayam Ashram that demand of Jeejays the sacrifice of their wealth when they speak of Khadi work as amounting to sweating the poor are satisfied with their glorious bounty of an anna per day. The poor have their *javari* and their unsatisfied hunger. What of these

Puduppalayam gods themselves? They are a "happy family" who have fat salaries. They have their rice and dhal with ghee to boot. There is of course no news of their Ashram wells having dried up; but how can they be immured to the suffering of the poor on account of the scarcity of water? As a mark of sympathy for them, the demi-gods have minimized the consumption of water by substituting it with milk and coffee. They have their migrations too, from the kitchen, to the prayer hall.

After all, we can't blame them for it, for as the old proverb goes, "the Brahmin is fond of his dish." You cannot at the same time deny the truth that the art of filling up their stomachs is as fine as the art of filling up the water jugs. They won't stop with this.

This is only a preparation for the coming elections and they hope that their labours shall be amply rewarded ere long. Keep awake, or when you rise up from your stupor you will find that fraud would have developed into the finest of fine arts.

- *Revolt*, 10 April 1929

Profiteering in Khadi

A Reply to Mr. C.Rajagopalachar

Mr. S. Ramanathan, M.A., B.L., ex-member of the Khadi Service, writes:

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, in a letter to the press, dated 25th September, complains against what he calls "ill-informed criticism" by a section of the press which he insinuates, has "motives". I am not aware of the allegations he seeks to answer, but am so amazed at the remarkable statements he makes in the course of his letter, regarding the fundamentals of the Khadi movement, that I think it necessary to draw public attention to them. Mr. Rajagopalachari is the *de facto* chief of the All India Spinners Association and is the virtual dictator of the khadi movement. His words are weighty utterances and cannot be lightly brushed aside as "ill-formed criticism".

Mr. Rajagopalachari says: "If only we had made khadi business so profitable from the private commercial point of view, our goal would have been already reached. There is enough selfishness and business interest in the country, at once to attract capital and energy into any really thriving business. Unfortunately, however khadi is not a business

giving fat dividends". Mr. Rajagopalachari regrets that the profits accruing from khadi are not yet sufficiently attractive: his goal is to be reached through 'fat dividends'. The great progenitor of the khadi movement had promised the advent of Ram Raj if we would but adhere to his programme. His successor treats us now to the prospect of an Elysium of "fat dividends". We had dreamt a dream – of the dawn of freedom of the awakening of a people, of the quickening of dormant energies, of the springing up of a mighty organization to lead the onward march of civilization. The youth of India was called upon to renounce worldly prospects, to suffer physical discomforts to go into villages to educate and to organize. The charka signified a national revival. Khadi was the rallying call of the leader to dare and to achieve. After eight years of ceaseless endeavour, Mr. Rajagopalachari permits us a glimpse of the approaching "goal": toiling spinners, sweating weavers, willing buyers, low costs, fixed prices, ready profits, quick return and 'fat dividends' – an *el dorado* where the khadi merchant rolls over heaps of rupees! Well, may one be tempted to exclaim, "Look here, on this picture and on this!"

Rationale of prices

In his anxiety to please "selfishness and business interests", Mr. Rajagopalachari goes to the length of maintaining that at current prices khadi profits are "little over" an anna per rupee. He moreover, quotes "unimpeachable figures" to support his assertion. I would humbly submit that his figures are wrong and do not warrant his conclusion. To understand the argument, a little examination of the rationale of khadi prices is necessary. Khadi is a commodity whose raw material costs over a third of the value of the finished product. The raw material for this essentially cottage industry has to be bought at the competitive international market which is subject to frequent fluctuations dependent upon world conditions. Hence the production cost of khadi varies with the speculative changes in the commerce of the world. The spread of the Boll Weevil disease, meteorological forecasts of rains or no rains in a certain corner of America, panicky reports of damages due to floods, adroit attempts by financiers to corner goods, industrial disputes, strikes and lock-outs, declarations of war or threatened conclusions of armistice between remote countries, these and similar causes have violent repercussions on the cotton market which, in turn, react upon the poor spinner at the cottage. This eminently unsatisfactory state of affairs was sought to be remedied two years ago by fixing

permanently the sale price of khadi so as to permit a margin for the producer to enable him to build up a reserve fund which would be utilized to contract the fluctuations of the cotton market thereby ensuring steady conditions of work for the spinner. The average price of cotton was assumed at Rs. 300 per candy of 520 Ibs. and the sale prices of the varieties of the finished product were worked out so as to yield one anna per rupee for the producer for every turn over of the capital.

On the one hand the A.I.S.A. which held the monopoly of the retail sales throughout the country undertook to maintain the sale prices permanently at the agreed rates. On the other hand the khadi merchants for whom Mr. Rajagopalachari now pleads solemnly agreed in the presence of the Mahatma to co-operate and build up the reserve fund. It was no doubt an ambitious programme involving a thorough overhauling of the production machinery and a corporate organization of the producers. The private merchant, intent upon quick returns and wide margins of profit, would not easily agree to the scheme. But the A.I.S.A. undertook the task with eyes wide open.

No reserve fund built

How did the scheme work? After the fixation of khadi prices there was a phenomenal fall in the cotton market and for considerable period cotton sold at rock bottom prices. There was a margin, sometimes, of Rs. 80 for every candy of cotton purchase. On former occasions, when there were similar falls, khadi prices also naturally came down. But now, the A.I.S.A. had a scheme on hand and in accordance with it, it maintained the sale prices at the higher artificial level already fixed. The private merchants, however, did not keep to the terms of the agreement but appropriated to themselves the huge margin of unearned profit, instead of utilizing it to build up the reserve fund. The A.I.S.A. felt powerless to enforce the scheme and as a result, an artificial surplus created for specific purposes has been allowed to be misappropriated. The public has been taxed to fill in private coffers. If Mr. Rajagopalachari was unable to persuade "selfishness and business interest" to adhere to the scheme he should at least have done justice to the consumer by lowering the sale price of khadi. The khadi wearer is, after all, a poor person and deserves Mr. Rajagopalachari's protection as much as the khadi merchant who is intent on "fat dividends".

Let us examine Mr. Rajagopalachari's "unimpeachable figures". He

assumes for the purpose of his calculation the price of cotton to be Rs. 282 per candy. But he does not tell us since when and for what length of period did cotton sell at Rs. 282. Even at the 282 market there is an unearned profit of Rs. 18 which Mr. Rajagopalachari seeks to ignore by using the phrase "little over". A six percent margin on the mere purchase of raw material is not an item which any manufacturer would ignore. And for a long period, as I have already stated, the margin has been not 8 but 180. I would invite A.I.S.A. executives to calculate and tell the public the total amount yielded by this margin during the last two years, taking into consideration the actual cost price of the value of cotton purchased and consumed by every producer. That amount or rather that portion of that amount, which has gone into private pockets instead of to a reserve fund, represents the penalty which the public has paid for having indulged in the luxury of A.I.S.A. management of khadi affairs.

Mr. Rajagopalachari seeks to enlist public sympathy by cataloguing the many and various difficulties of khadi administration. He wants us to know and be impressed by the fact that he is running a really very huge and extensive organization in fact "spread over all the provinces in India". People "conversant with the details of business can understand what it means"! Let the mere man, therefore, who is bound to be "ill-informed", stand at a respectful distance and gape in wonder. May I however, take courage in both my hands and humbly suggest that almighty as the A.I.S.A. may be, and extensive in its sway, the profiteer leads it by the nose.

- *Revolt*, 20 October 1929

Notes to 1.5

1. 'Jeejay' was the pseudonym of George Joseph, a leading lawyer and Congressman of the time and a participant in the Vykom satyagraha
2. G.Ramachandran was the President of A.I.S.A. – All India Spinners' Association.

1.6 Opposing Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya

The Pandit Again

We are glad that Pandit Malaviya is engaging our close attention. The learned Pandit is undertaking vigorous tours while the circus masters are busy with their electioneering campaigns. Our Tamil Nad is undergoing the ceremony of purification by the touch of the holy feet of the *bhoo-suras.* The cream of the face-born has turned its attention to the so-called masses. Malaviyas, Murthis, Iengars, Iyers and Sastris (*generic brahmin caste names – editors)* are spending days and nights in their dutiful work 'for the country'. The words of 'Swaraj', 'independence', 'Mother India' and the like are spread in every atom of the atmosphere. Outbursts of eloquent oratory are ringing in our ears. Bashirs and Sabapathis are playing the Vibishana (1). The very oxygen that is inhaled by us contains cent percent partriotism. The ever wakeful eyes of the 'Devas' are riveted to our Tamil Nad, and the Seven Chiranjivis (Immortals) are pouring blessings upon the leaders of the intelligentia.

At one corner, there is our Pandit with his newly learnt queer interpretations of castes and untouchability, with his favourite Sanskrit slogas and quotations from Bhagvat Gita and with his burning anxiety to enthrone the poor God. The Pandit's caste and temple entry have a meaning of his own, just as Mr. Gandhi's *varnashrama* has got his own meaning. The Rama of these two leaders is quite different from the Rama of the world. The great Pandit from the north is solving the temple-entry problem just in the same way as the Saivites are solving it with the help of their *Periyapuranam*. His surprises at and protests against 'a movement which is out to destroy caste' are undergoing severe tests. His plea for the Hindu religion of which he poses to be an ardent advocate, ought to have come a thousand years back and that too, in other countries. The Pandit is learning day by day that fresh versions of Sanskrit sayings, which his memory is so capable of, cannot help him any more. The Pandit is painfully made to realize that South India is no longer the suitable ring for his acrobatic feats. He is finding his work unpleasant but not tedious. For, fortunately there are some people still who are unwilling to lose the opportunity of seeing a new tiger in the zoo. People may hate the tiger's yawns, but they pay any amount to

see a new animal.

At the other corner there are the South India patriots with their crowded programme of active tours and beach-trained oratory. Evidently, the lecture season has come in Tamil Nad. For the next six months and more there will be a busy trade in God and religion. The traders are already at their work, with a big capital behind them. It is rumoured that a long list of the achievements of these patriots is in the course of preparation. The trader knows as a matter of fact, that it is too late to trade on the Hindu Religious Endowments Act. Even in the last elections it did not pay them as much as they expected, hence there will be fresh commodities this year. The Chingleput conference (2) will furnish them with sufficient materials to be misinterpreted and misrepresented to the people, and there is the innocent Justice Party with its proverbial 'anti-Congress views', to bear the burden. There is the Self-respect movement to remind them of their long-forgotten God and religion. These facts can be usefully twisted and mended to serve the 'patriotic' purposes of the circus masters. If 'Gandhi-ki-jai' does not serve them as before, they will try 'Swami-ki-jai' or 'Religion-ki-jai'. There will be not a village where 'the sin of unsociability' will not be talked of and there will be not a town where downpours of patriotism will not be showered. Instead of national songs, there will be tried some religious songs this year. If they find it too late to prepare a record of their work in the past, they can safely resort to vituperations on the Justice Party to which can easily be attributed the business of 'job hunting'. Then the resolutions of the Chingleput conference can be utilized in the name of God and religion, if not the country. Both the Justice Party and the Self-respectors can be mixed up together at least to hoodwink the public and defeat the Justicites in the coming elections. And there are Kalyanasundrams and Varadarajalus who can be cunningly handled for propaganda through the press. It is enough if some more subscribers are promised for the 'Navasakti' and the 'Tamil Nadu' (3). They will dance to the tunes of the circus masters.

But alas, the public are not be so easily bamboozled as before, they have had enough of the South Indian patriotism, and its fire-eating promises. The people know how far the bureaucratic lion has been bearded in its own den; how far the 'satanic' British Government has been obstructed from functioning; how far the goal to Swaraj has been reached and how far the Independents are independent of honesty and straight-forwardness. They have seen how far the constructive

programme of the Congress has borne results; how far unsociability has gone from the land; and how far they have sincerely attempted to drive away the drink evil. They have seen how far khaddar is feeding the 'dumb millions'. It is no wonder then, that the 'patriots' have hit upon new promises of saving God and religion. 'Vote for the Congress and protect your gods', will be the election cry. For, are they not, being *bhoo-suras* (Gods on earth) bound to help their powerless heads?

'The Millennium of Swaraj', these nationalists used to say 'will be as happy as Ramaraj'. And it is why Mr. Malavia enjoins upon the people to utter the 'Mahayana' mantra. Thereby he hopes to get Swaraj which is Ramaraj. And an audience of 10,000 at Kottayam shout out 'Ravana-ki-jai!' For they fear that under Ramaraj, they will have to lose the head of a Non-brahmin for the death of every Brahmin child. They fear the restitution of *suttee*, in the name of chastity. They fear the instalment of *varnashrama* in the name of religion. They fear more Brahmin Conferences in the name of Sanatana Dharma. They fear more impaling of the Jains and Buddhists by the worshippers of Siva (the God of Love). If under an alien Raj these orthodox bands of religious bigots are left to masquerade in the land and are allowed to use, in season and out of season, the treacherous weapons of God and religion, and thereby threaten the people into submission socially as well as politically, are not the submerged communities justified in dreading the Brahmin Raj, or worse than that, the Raj of the Vibishans?

Let us frankly tell these patriots that the public feel it extremely sickening to hear more of these priggish platitudes. It is no longer possible to hide the nakedness of the Swarajist promises. Let them however try their last trump card but let them only play out the game.

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929

Our North Indian Leaders

Pandit Malaviya, in his recent speech at Madras has shown his true colours. Evidently the face-born gentleman has unmasked his real self. The ringmasters of the Madras political circus have brought in another quadruped from the north, which is performing political feats and social somersaults. The tiger from Allahabad is roaring in its brahminic fury. It is uttering half-hatched, self-contradictory ideas to suit the tastes of the threaded humanity of our province.

Our readers are aware that it is usual for the Brahmins of our province,

especially of the city of Madras, to bring some great personalities from North India, whenever they find themselves in trying circumstances. They did the same with reference to men like Swami Vivekananda, Bepin Chandra Pal, C.R. Das, Lala Lajapat Rai and others. They are playing the same game with Mr. Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and others. When there is any popular movement which directly affects the superiority of the privileged community, when there is any sign of the upliftment of the down-trodden masses, when the monopolists begin to feel the helplessness of their situation, then, they generally resort to such ingenious methods. Some prominent men of the north are caught hold of and given erroneous information of all matters which are detrimental to the selfish aims of the opportunists.

A few hours stay at Madras is enough to poison the minds of these leaders, who are otherwise sympathetic and large-hearted. Their first speeches at Madras will reflect the hidden Brahminism infused into them. Then, in spite of the Brahmin-guarded tour of these men, they get the scent of the real situation, though not in its entirety. They are sometimes forced by circumstances to come face to face with real facts. Then their last speech in the province will bear quite opposite results. And the ring-masters will be not a little sorry for the cat having been let out of the bag.

It was only after his South Indian visit that Swami Vivekananda observed that the "Brahmin cobra must suck out his own poison, if the patient should survive". Lajapt Rai came to realise the overbearing importance of social reconstruction only when he was denied admission into the Trivandrum temple. It was only then that he proclaimed that "religion was the real cause of all the abuses of society, that he could find nothing human in the temples; that the Madras presidency is getting suffocated amidst the poisonous atmosphere of religion and God; and that fearless reformers are immediately needed in Madras". It was only when he was refused entry into the temple at Cape Comerin that Mr. Gandhi understood the A.B.C. of South Indian matters. And his further tours in the Tamil Nad in spite of being guarded by the Chota Gandhi, have brought from his month the irrefutable truth that the "temples are the dens of prostitutes". More instances of this kind are not wanting. Suffice it to note that those who come form the north give vent to their ideas only when they themselves meet with the opportunity of tasting the bitter truths.

Naturally the Pandit has made his momentous arrival. One of the master-strokes of this brahminic clannishness has been already given out of his recent speech at Madras. He says, "the caste system had existed and would exist in spite of the frantic efforts which are sometimes made to demolish it". The Allahabad Pandit "is surprised to find in this province a movement which not only wants to demolish caste, but also to demolish God Himself ". He says, "this new evil creeping into their midst should be nipped in the bud. It is a very difficult task to right a wrong which had existed for a long time". About the admission to the temples the Pandit says "it might be that there are certain rules in certain temples not to admit certain people beyond a certain place. I can quite understand it, and in such places these rules should be very clearly laid and made known to all, so that there could be no complaint."

Wise words are these. What else can be expected from a Pandit, and that too a Brahmin Pandit when he is especially surrounded by Varnashramites who take pleasure in fondling child widows? This brings to our memory, a suggestion in the vernacular about the idea of a mischievous wounded monkey which is at the same time also angry and drunken. The Pandit may be unaware of the full significance of the Self-respect movement. But it is no reason why he should blurt out unauthentic matters resulting from misrepresented facts. His surprise at a movement aiming at demolishing caste, is a surprise to us, and will be a surprise to the learned world. If the Pandit only takes some trouble in touring the province more leisurely, we are sure, he will not venture such hasty observations. If he is only patient enough to know that more than a dozen papers are published in the policy of the Self-respect movement, that they command the largest number of subscribers, and that the 'Kudi Arasu', the chief organ of the movement is commanding the largest circulation in the presidency, he will not indulge in the empty dream of nipping the movement in its bud. Dear Panditji, it is not a bud; it is a tree whose roots have penetrated to an immeasurable depth, and whose branches have extended to far off Turkey, Russia, Afghanistan, China, Burma and South Africa. Its fragrance is being enjoyed by the youths of the world. And its principles are being inhaled by every free-thinker, truth-seeker and reasoner.

Now to the Pandit's next remark that the wrong existing for a long time could not be righted. This is certainly an old man's despair. We should advise the despondent Pandit to stop his tours immediately

and perform yagas at the foot of the Himalays, even as his forefathers are said to have done. Let him not spread his poison of despondency in a land where fatalism has already sucked the blood of the people. His remarks about the temples are the real expressions of his brahminic heart. The saviour of Hinduism is at his pitch when he wants specific rules to be laid up for the various castes to enter the temples. Even in that case, we are sorry that the existing temples should be demolished, and new ones built with more number of rooms for each caste of worshippers. We doubt whether the Pandit means it seriously, or simply wants to be true to his salt. But one thing we know, that even if his commonsense repudiates such inhuman customs, his thread across the body will remind him that he is first a Brahmin, and then only a man. It is really a curse to our country that such big heads as Pandit Malaviya sell their heads to an unscrupulous section of humanity. It is high time the Pandit rids himself away from the land of the lotus-eaters and begins to know facts at first hand. Dear Panditji we heartily welcome you in our midst as a guest, but not as a preacher or *bashyakar* of Hinduism.

- *Revolt*, 8 May 1929

Pandit Malayviya and Self-respect

(By Mr. S. Lakshmirathan, M.A., B.L.)

Pandit Malaviya who is touring in South India now has fallen into the same pitfalls and snares that are usually and habitually set up by a certain section of the public who claim for themselves a sort of preordained congenital superiority, based not on reason and merit, but on the accident of birth, and which is tolerated by a people abounding in ignorance and superstition. Fully aware that they can live – if living one may call it – only by booming and bolstering up this belief and keeping the people in their continued misery and ignorance, they pay their unstinted devotion to, and spend their whole energy in an art of mischievous misinterpretation of any movement that is started for the welfare and awakening of the masses, and which would reveal the utter artificiality and woeful worthlessness of this class of people in all their nakedness. This is not the first instance of, nor Panditji is the first visitor to fall a prey to their clever art. Their subtle hypocrisy can be traced through ages long prior to the present day, and many a learned man of deeper insight and broader vision than

Panditji, has been deluded and victimized by them. And we can well say that at no other period of time had they such necessity for the use of their black art of vilification than at present, when the advancing tide of civilization, force of culture, and the radiant rays of the Self-Respect Movement have already begun slowly; but surely and firmly, to penetrate the minds of masses and make each one of them feel and realize the highest Truth that Philosophy can teach, namely that he is That (Tatvamasi) and as such inferior to none in Himself.

By this art of vilification and organized misinterpretation they conspire to impose upon the minds of great and noble men like Panditji, whose minds so far as these vital and local problems are concerned, are a *tabula rasa*, false ideas and beliefs, which when they are given vent to in public, through their mouths, produce an illusion by their association with these otherwise honest men, and appear as truths in themselves. The production of such an effect is what these men desire and strive for. But they are grievously mistaken. Even the very men who are victimized now, like the Panditji, will be the foremost when they acquire a first hand knowledge of such movements, to condemn in no unequivocal terms, the hypocrisy that originally clouded their intellect and the truths that they subsequently learned. This is what actually happened in the case of a much greater man like Mr. Ghandi who after seeing things for himself compared our temples with the dwelling houses of prostitutes. While any amount of superstition, delusion, falsehood and hypocrisy, even when they are associated directly or indirectly with reputed names that cast a magic spell on the down trodden masses, cannot hide the Truth or cloud the Reality for ever, yet it is to be admitted that *"Truth* from the lips of these men will prevail with double sway".

We may well pause to think and reflect, what would befall such villainy then. We may warn them, that it is nothing but Destruction and Sheer Annihilation. That Panditji should say, that "he was *surprised* to find in this province a movement which not only wanted to demolish caste, but also to demolish God himself", would alone suffice to illustrate the colossal dose of poisonous ignorance injected into his mind by these ignoble men; and in the very next sentence, Panditji blurted out the truth by admitting, "*he was told* that there was a party growing here which did not believe in the existence of God". We wish to tell the Pandit that nothing which this organized group will do or tell others, will in the least surprise us as it has surprised him. We only request

that these honest visitors, if they have any faith in the maxim, "That there is no religion higher than Truth", will come in personal touch with these movements and learn things for themselves.

- *Revolt*, 8 May 1929

Panditji's Propaganda

(By Mr. K.M. Balasubramanian)

Ever since the learned Pandit Malaviya set his foot on the South Indian soil, he has been most vociferously proclaiming from the raised daises the untold advantages of our time-worn caste system and its impossibility of destruction at any time in the future. Evidently he is engaged in the vain task of turning down the surging tide of organized opposition to this most appalling and suicidal system of caste carried on throughout the length and breadth of this part of the Peninsula. Undoubtedly he is the best fitted person for bolstering up the fast tottering edifice of this antiquated caste system, but alas, even a Pandit Malaviya is incapable of that.

In his recent speech delivered on the 9th May at the Kottayam S.N.D.P. Conference, the Panditji is reported to have said that "the idea of destroying caste was an idle one". I fear the learned lecturer is "born a century too late". One is struck with untold wonder and astonishment at the altogether antiquated ideas and opinions of the Panditji. As well he may declare from his seat in the Assembly "the idea of abolishing child marriage is an idle one". The countless and colossal evils of this cruel caste system are too many and too patent to be lost sight of by any, with eyes to see. The pros and cons of it have for long been discussed and weighed and the consensus of the opinion of the impartial critics and enlightened reformers favours the destruction of this deadly engine of inequities and tyranny. Socially economically and politically the caste system is the greatest obstacle in the way of our nation's progress. Mr. Chatterjee remarks that "it (caste) dwarfs individual genius, kills initiative, and enterprise and hampers growth and progress" Further "a rigid caste system is antagonistic to progress..."

The social and political effects are equally harmful, though the Panditji complacently refers to the past achievements of this caste system. Says he: "caste system existed in India when India was at the zenith of civilization and power". But the Panditji assumes, what ought to be proved. Was the caste system alone, or for that matter was it even chiefly

responsible for the past glories of our country? Granting it was, does it follow that it may conduce to our future greatness? With equally good logic might we assert that 'early marriage', 'sutti' and the 'woeful widowhood' existed when India was at her zenith of power and prestige. Maybe but "*old order changeth yielding place to new And God fulfils himself in many ways(?) lest one good custom should corrupt the world.*"

Indeed one is induced to wonder what Pandit Malaviya and men of his way of thinking mean by *caste*. If by 'caste system' they mean, (and me thinks they cannot mean anything else) a professional division of the society, then ill is spent all their energy; for their eloquent defence of caste comes too late. All those erstwhile impenetrable barriers have been broken down and the former water-tight compartments the community has been divided into, have been completely blown up. But what generally obtains at present here, in our parts at any rate, under the aegis of this shadow of the caste is a meaningless and iniquitous difference between one set of people and another. It is this difference we seek and sedulously attempt to eradicate and surely none can ever checkmate us in this sacred duty of killing the "killing canker".

To conclude, if the Panditji by his enthusiastic defence on the platforms defends caste system as it obtains at present, then surely, his is a voice in the wilderness. The demolition of 'caste' is one of the programmes in the national renaissance and reconstructions and the Indian National Social Conference of 1928 presided over by Mr. Jayakar too has passed a resolution in favour of abolishing it. It has sanctioned inter-dining and inter-marrying and equality amongst Hindus, all of which when accomplished would divest the caste system of its true significance. But if after that, caste retains and signifies anything else, well may the Pandit plead for its retention and we wish him all success in his attempt.

But it is too much to expect from a man who, while advocating temple entry, rather sarcastically remarks; "It might be that there are certain rules in certain temples not to admit certain people beyond certain places. I can quite understand it and in such places these rules should be very clearly laid and made known to all so that there could be no complaint."Very characteristic of the Panditji indeed! What in the name of equity, does he mean by 'certain class' of people? If birth, as he himself declares, is no index of a man's character and if a Brahmin who is bad, is a 'sudra' as the Panditji himself duels after quoting Vedavyasa, would he admit every Tom, Jack and Harry with a thread on him into

the Sanctum Sanctorum, however bad he may be and forbid the entrance of a 'sudra' who is good? Well, we can only warn the Panditji that all the meaningless and mouth-filling rodomontade cannot be swallowed, at any rate by us, the Non-Brahmins however much he may be hailed by the microscopic minority of this presidency. His unflinching advocacy of temple entry on the one had and the eloquent defence of the caste system on the other, the two diametrically opposite things can only go to show us the Pandit in his native, true, brahminic colour "Delenda est 'caste'".

- *Revolt*, 22 May 1929

Will the Caste Go?

(By Mr. Bahuleyan)

"Caste cannot go, Caste as it is, is good. We need only wash out the dirty portion of it. It existed even when India reached its highest zenith of civilisation," says our revered Malaviya of All Indian reputation. No doubt he is a great learned man amongst Hindus. He is noted for his proficiency in the Vedas and Shastras of Hinduism. He is known to be a "Sanatana Hindu" who believes in Vedic culture, and a rigid Varnashramite. He unhesitatingly says even in these days of enlightenment that Brahmins are face-born and "Sudras" are born from the feet of Brahma. We can easily understand why and what for Pandit Malaviya pleads for caste system as long as he maintains the above idea of Brahmins and "Sudras." It simply means Brahmin Malaviya does not want caste system to go. He wishes us to believe that caste system is good in itself and to admit that he and his community people are born superior and the rest of us lowly born to serve them. About this dear wish of his, he makes speeches wherever he goes about. I do not see any other motive in all his South Indian lecturers than that he wants caste to be perpetuated. Truly no student of the Vedas can go against caste based on birth.

Says Mr. Malaviya, "It is futile to work against caste. It is mere waste of time and energy; for nobody has succeeded in doing away with caste." Is this an argument for the necessity of caste, I wonder. Well, none has put up an earnest and sincere fight to kill the caste demon is the answer for it. Lately of course, several socio-religious movements have sprung up to work against caste as a side issue, and they too have succeeded to a certain extent in that sphere. Up to this no movement has been begun

with the only intention of doing away caste from India in all its spheres. Because those millions of masses who are being exploited and oppressed in the "sacred" name of Hindu religion and caste are yet left uneducated and hence quite helpless.

The religion of "Rama Raj" has come to a close when "Sudras" were forbidden by law from receiving education. Fortunately, British Raj has set in with education for all. The huge masses of India who were tyrannized for centuries in the name of caste system have now begun to open their eyes in the light of British Raj's Education and see for themselves things happening around them. They are slowly waking up from their age long slumber caused by the mesmerism of Hindu religion, and are realizing their deplorable condition in society.

They have begun to think about their liberties and rights in the country and are becoming conscious of their great might and wonderful possibilities which lie hidden in them. These are all healthy symptoms to show that there is life in them. On the day when they wake up to their full consciousness, caste system and every other rotten systems and customs are bound to perish. Besides this, those communities which vigourously plead for the upkeep of the caste system, will be nowhere in the near future.

It has been proved beyond doubt that caste system is a satanic institution founded upon a number of *slokas* just to allow the Brahmin to exploit mercilessly the dumb millions of the country. One thing is certain, that henceforth it will not be desirous of Malaviya and his caste people to pass their days quite easily with the least bodily exertion and labour, chanting their blessed manthrams, making others at the same time work day in and day out. All these "golden days" have come to a close.

They need not be dreaming that caste would stand on, since it has survived many obstacles. That is just like the old man's hope to live even when he gasps for his last breath. A good number of institutions which had long lives, have perished. "Slave trade cannot be abolished" argued its Malaviyas. Yet it was abolished when the people seriously wished for its abolition. "Autocracy cannot be replaced by democracy", pleaded its Malaviyas and yet how many states remain to be ruled by autocratic kings? "Prohibition is an impossibility" said its Malaviyas too and America has made it a complete possibility. Likewise there are so many instances in the world history to be quoted, when world wide vices had been demolished root and branch. Yet our Malaviyas have

not the broadmindedness and foresight to learn a lesson from the above facts. They blissfully connive at them and have the wonderful audacity to prophecy that caste system is peculiar to Indian soil and hence caste cannot go. What a Himalayan hoax!.

When foreign Malaviyas come and say "You Indians are not yet to be given Swaraj" how vigorously and fluently our real Malaviyas are out to argue with them and try to vindicate their abilities to rule for themselves. The very same Malaviyas cannot see eye to eye with us, when we say caste would go and should go for the salvation of India. Then they pose themselves to be ignorant of all past histories and experiences of men simply out of their selfish unwillingness to get out of their cosy wells and to view humanity with a broader outlook.

In fact, our Malaviyas have come to understand really that caste is being destroyed. It is only out of their anxiety and fear that they babble now that caste cannot go and should be maintained. Every listful ear and willing eye can distinctly hear and see the death knell of the passing caste demon.

Ten years ago, the very word "Inter-dining" was poison to the Ezhava mentality at large. Only very recently they showed at Kottayam that they cannot even patiently hear Mr. Malaviya saying, "Caste is a necessity." What a rapid change! Does that indicate that caste is to survive or to perish! Again Mr. Malavya said that Ezhavas of Malabar alone cannot blot out caste from India. There are cores of people throughout India who are suffering like Ezhavas of Malabar. They are all jointly going against caste. All wake up and unitedly march against the caste demon hand in hand and then the few caste people and the couple of Malaviyas who now want to safeguard caste would be hissed away like a dried leaf in their exhaling wind. The majority of the Hindu population who form the backbone of the Indian nation is treacherously oppressed and suppressed by the caste devil. They have fully realized their wonderful possibilities and power latent in them. And the time has come to bid adieu to the caste system and with it the Malaviyas!

- *Revolt*, 29 May 1929

Malaviya's Last Trump Card

(By Kirk)

Malaviyaji is almost finishing his Madras tour. The down-trodden

people who are awakened to a sense of Self-respect have their hopes in him shattered. Yet Malaviyaji has got a strong faith in his orthodoxy and its efficacy in hypnotizing the people to his creed. The Varnashramites of Madras are very much pleased with the achievements of the Pandit even though they put up a show of opposition to his seeming heterodoxy. They know that their game of disapproval of the Pandit's activities will give him some new adherents, Neo Hindus, who shall in reality be recruits to the Varnashramite creed.

Malaviyaji's mission of anti-untouchability while keeping intact the caste system is no new slogan. Bhai Paramanand and the other North Indian leaders who form the extreme wing of the Hindu Sabha and who have organized the "Jat Pat Todak Mandal", the society for breaking castes and creeds, know the real value of the Pandit's slogan. It is an apology for his ultra-orthodoxy in his advanced province.

In the south, the slogan of the Aryavarta cannot hold water. We know that the caste system itself is graded untouchability. Unapproachability and unseeability are parts of Dharma that find advocacy in revealed texts, in the liberal Shastras and Puranas of the Pandit. The majority of the population is groaning under the dead weight of religious tyranny and hypocrisy. Whenever the people come to a realization of their degradation, the scourge of the Brahmin is upon them.

The Self-respect movement has enlightened the masses. The Brahmin high priests with Hindu religion and ethics can no longer enslave the souls of the masses. The core of our society at the apex of which was the Brahmin and at the base the Pariah, is sure to turn upside down and the lotus-eaters at the apex are sure to crumble.

They are therefore doing all that lie in their power to avert such a calamity. Malaviyaji has not lost hopes in the powers of the Brahmin-spell of religion, even though his Varnashramite comrades at Madras are despondent. He goes about starting Hindu Mahasabhas wherever he sojourns; but their fate is already sealed. Pandit's activity in this direction is the last straw on the camel's back.

There is yet another aspect of religio-nationalism of Malaviyaji which is pregnant with grave danger, but which we are likely to ignore. It is his advocacy of Hindi as *lingua franca* in the place of Sanskrit, which he says can no longer be the common language.

The prime cause that led to the destruction of a strong rational society

and threw us into compartments of warring castes and creeds is clear as day light to us. It was due to the hypnotization of Sanscritic culture. When the south is making efforts to shake the dust of a Sanscritic culture off its feet, the demon is taking a new avatar and is threatening us with destruction, in the shape of Hindi. A brief survey of the Hindi movement as propagated by the Hindi Prachar Sabha will speak for itself.

The problem of a national language versus common language was already discussed in these columns and a strong case was put up against a national language. Even granting the necessity for a national language let us see whether we can tolerate the movement, as it is.

The father of the Hindi movement, Mr. Gandhi says that Hindi, in its national aspect includes its Urdu form. According to him, a synthesis of Sanscritised Hindi and Persianised Urdu would alone constitute the national language. As for the script to be employed in writing such a language he does not give a clear lead.

Now let us see as to what sort of a language that the Hindu Prachar Sabha is propagating and that which finds favour with Malaviyaji Why does the Sabha advocate Sanscritised Hindi distinctly apart from Urdu? Why is the Sabha not only not in favour of this national form of Hindi, but is absolutely anti-national? The reasons are obvious. The Sabha must find for their Hindi, recognition in the South Indian Universities that have already given a place for Urdu. We don't mind if they happen to be pro or anti-national but we cannot put up with their pro-Hindi activities.

Let us take for instance the question of script. We once before drew the attention of the readers to the chaotic and unscientific nature of the Devanagari script, employed in writing Hindi. It is a colossal waste of time and energy to try to acquire a knowledge of about 566 characters it contains, consisting of vowels, consonants and their combinations. There are again five types of conjunct consonants which swell the above number with about 60 more. Such is the tyranny of this script. Even with a fair knowledge of this script, you cannot master the pronunciation of Hindi written in this script. This irregularity is of course due to the inevitable difficulty of adapting a script not suited to the genius of the language.

This is an age of enlightenment when thinking men are not favourably

disposed even towards the Roman script in spite of its many advantages. It is a simple one consisting of only 26 characters. Most of the languages of the west are written in this script. A knowledge of the script will pave the way for the valuable acquisitions of art and science. Further it has the unique advantage of being printed and typewritten easily. Yet the world is for inventing a universal script, simple, easy and absolutely scientific. The Devanagari script with all its multiplicity, chaos and primitive barbarism is simply intolerable. Why should the Sabha then persist in its propagation of this script? Let the readers draw their own conclusions!

Nationalism in Hindi is therefore a camouflage. It is a movement which ultimately aims at a cultural conquest of the south. The pronouncements of Mr. Gandhi and the activities of the Hindi Prachar Sabha, will sufficiently speak for themselves in favour of our conclusions.

Among the activities of the Sabha, the celebration of Tulsi Jayanti *i.e.* the Birthday celebration of Tulsidas, the author of the Hindi Ramayana throughout the presidency is the most important. Examinations in Tulsi Ramayana are also held every year. In a province where there is no Muslim-Hindu antagonism and where the majority of the Mussalmans won't grudge the acquisition of the knowledge of either Hindustani or Urdu, we cannot easily swallow this piece of Ramayana propaganda that may not find favour with the Mussalmans, in the name of nationalism.

Mr. Gandhi opines that a majority of the Hindu population will have to go without a knowledge of Sanscrit, the language of religion. So they must have religion interpreted through Hindi. A Hindi propagandist must also be an evangelist of Hinduism. The Ramayana of Tulsidas is the only book in Hindi that can interpret Hinduism to the masses. It is "a mine of Dharmas, a Symposium of morals." It is this book that inspired and still inspires Mr. Gandhi. He owes his Mahatmaship to two books in this world, the one being Tulsi Ramayana and the other being Gita in Sanscrit.

For the information of the readers we give below some samples of Tulsidas morality and Dharma. The story of Bharata and his followers going to meet Rama in the forest is of course well known. Bharata, on his way to the forest was obliged to spend a night in the Ashram of the rishi known as Bharadwaj. Tulsidas, the moralist poet sings of the glory of the Rishi and his hospitality. The poet in his exuberant imagination

would have his sage Bharadwaj to surround Bharata and his followers with all luxuries, with damsels of exquisite beauty, ready to pander to their lust. Morality worthy of the sages indeed!

This is a bit of Tulsi morality. Now we shall have a dose of his Dharma. This radical philosopher has got drastic views on Dharma. He has got an informidable faith in the rod, in religious matters. Persuasion has no place in his philosophy. In one of his "choupayies', he runs amock and cries out, "Drums, beasts, shudras, women, all these are entitled to be treated with the rod". Tulsidas ki Jai!.

Can a self-respecting nation tolerate such religion and morals interpreted through Hindi?

- *Revolt*, 22 May 1929

A Fruitless Tour of Social reform

(By Mr. M. Ramavarma Thumpan, M.A. L.T) (4)

Pandit Malavyaji's recent South Indian tour was an awful failure. The object of his tour was Social Reform. He hoped that with the offering of two mantras he could reform society, remove untouchability and even convert Christians and Muslims into Hindus. If he had any semblance of success or even toleration it was only when he preached to the converted. The conservative sections of the Nambudris listened to him patiently and evoked his admiration by their parrotlike chanting of Veda the result of so many years of hard, albeit useless, memorizing; but they looked askance at the Pundit's references to the removal of untouchability and temple entry. At Kottayam when Punditji attempted to better his first manthram of *Rama Namam* the audience lost patience and grew restless. The question put to him, how he would reconcile caste and conversion, i.e., into what caste he would place a man converted from other faiths and if he should be placed in the caste he chooses to be in, which is nothing but fair, why caste Hindus be not allowed to change castes and choose what caste he liked – this question was rather inconvenient to him. The birth basis of castes would in that case go. That at the late hour, considering his old age and fatigue the people did not press him for an answer, bespeaks the respect they had for him and their highly cultured and gentlemanly behavior.

At Trichur and Trivandrum he was listened to with respect. In one of these places he even defined caste as being based on the quality of the

man rather than on his birth and quoted the oft cited and utterly worn out sloka from the Bhagavat Geetha. No one takes that sloka seriously when one deals with caste troubles.

To crown all, Punditji ignominiously failed in his debate with the conservative pundits of Madras, if the paper reports are true. He had to confess that removal of untouchability, religious conversion to Hinduism and temple entry had no sanction in the Vedas. His citation were outcited. Pitable indeed was the sight of an accomplished lawyer like the Punditji so full of resources bowing down his head before a few old priests whose only boast is that they have converted their memory into a dustbin of forgotten verses. The Punditji could not, it appears, muster courage to assert that Vedas or no Vedas, these reforms are necessary in the present crisis and if there were no sanction for them new sanctions have to be created. Sorry the dynamic pundit did not ask the static pundits whether the use of coffee, tea, ovaltine, aerated waters, motor car, railways, electric lamps and the thousand and one conveniences of modern civilization had Vedic sanction. Things that could not have been dreamt of by the writers of Vedas could not have been sanctioned or prohibited those innocent authors.

Would the social reformers bid farewell to this past complex in them and be bold enough to look around and forge ahead? The crying evil of India today is the sad want of mutual confidence amongst the several sections of the people. Long life of slavery under the British administration of public safety, religious neutrality and quiet, steady and peaceful exploitation and consequent impoverishment has eaten up their capacity to make mutual adjustments. It is only now that people have opened their eyes and realize now like Gulliver in Liliput they are bound down by so many chains. A wrenching is necessary. Let the reformers boldly and fearlessly face the situation.

In North India the Hindu-Muslim rupture is the main social disease. Instead of creating a militant class of Hindu fanatics to fight against Mahomedan fanatics and irritating the latter by the Sudhi and Sangatan movements, why should not they try to popularize interdining and intermarriage between Hindus and Muslims and create harmony among the two sections and eventually lead both to the ideal of each man and woman having a religion of his or her own, the mosques and temples being made equally accessible to all. Of the present day Muslims the majority who are the children of Hindus converted in

the past do not feel sorry for having seceded from the faith of their forefathers. The great Akbar did not feel any qualm of conscience to show openly his toleration for and even inclination towards Hinduism. Conciliation and compromise in social reform activities pay better than rivalry and opposition. The newspapers tell us often of marriages between Mahomedan and Christian youths and Brahmin girls. All this shows that there is nothing fundamentally wrong in such alliances. It is high time that people realize and feel ashamed of the silliness of cutting each other's throat over the question of music before mosques and cow-killing. The descendants of the present day Hindus and Muslims would have but a very poor opinion of their forefathers who wasted their time and energy on such silly and disgraceful fight when they ought to have been uniting to free themselves from the yoke of slavery pressing heavily on the necks of both the communities alike. Let us deserve well of our posterity, Let us hope that Pundit Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi accompanied by Shaukat Ali and Mohamed Ali will go round India preaching and practicing inter-dining and helping the youths to take to inter-marriage amongst the people of all castes and creeds in India. Such a mission might, why, *will* create an atmosphere for giving up the fight of communal representation and for gaining a glorious Swarajya so that India may become one of the great powers of the world, rich in resources of men and wealth, and of thought and action. Would our leaders have the courage, patriotism, large heartedness and clearness of intellectual vision to work for and usher in such a golden age. Inter-dining and inter-marriage are the two sovereign remedies for all the social evils of communal strife in India.

– *Revolt*, 23 June 1929

The Pandits at War

(A. Bahuleyan)

Recently there was a competition at Madras between Pandit Malaviya and the South Indian Sastris in discussing whether untouchability can be removed, whether the "untouchables" can be allowed temple entry and whether they are entitled to have "Manthra Deeksha". Both parties quoted slokas of their shastras as their authority during the debate. Mr. Malaviya argued that untouchability can be removed and that untouchables can be given temple entry and Manthra Deeksha, quoting several slokas from the Sastras in his favour. In return, the South Indian

shastris also quoted any number of slokas in their favour and argued that the above things cannot be allowed at all. The fun of it was that most of the slokas quoted by the shastris were quite new to the North Indian Pandit's ears. So he asked for their printed edition. The shastris at once sent for those books and exhibited them before the Pandit. Mr. Malaviya personally believes in the validity of the shastras with due estimation and regard for them. So he had to bow his head in consent even though he had not come across any of those slokas, even once in this life. Thus he was forced to comply with the Madras Pandits view and fail miserably in the debate.

Then Mr. Malaviya began to argue with the Madras shastris on the point of mercy. Taking pity upon the poor untouchables Mr. Malaviya requested the shastris to grant them temple entry and 'Manthra Deeksha'.

Again our shastris defeated Pandit Malaviya by arguing that since the shastras clearly prohibit them from allowing the untouchables the above said favours. They would be really doing them harm under the impression that they are doing good to the untouchables out of mercy. Those who admit the divinity of the shastras are naturally forced to recognize the Madras shastris views upon this issue.

We are to learn much from this Madras competitive examination. It is clear that these Hindus yet have the audacity to believe that every bit of the world's structure is responsible to their slokas. If anybody goes for a reform it seems that he should quote slokas in his favour. When we feel the necessity for a reform it does not count much if there are slokas in favour or against the reform. If the slokams do not side with the reforms it simply means that they are absurd.

They are really wonderful people who wrote the slokam that, "The world depends upon God; God depends upon Manthrams, Manthrams depends upon Brahmins. Hence the Brahmin is the God of God."

We are forced to wonder when we see these wonderful beings yet struggling to effect their tricks even in these advanced times. We should make them clearly understand that it is high time for them to shelve all their slokams, made only to condemn humanity and to exploit the poor at large. Among the Non Brahmins too there are some men who think much of these slokams. Otherwise these Brahmins would not have dared to disgrace India reciting their foolish slokams.

When a Miss Mayo writes some thing about the nonsense discussed by our revered Malaviyas and Madras shastris, what a hubbub our "Desa Bhakthas" make! As long as India possesses leaders like Malaviya standing and learning to bow their heads shamelessly in submission when a couple of shastris come and quote some outworn slokas against the very legitimate and elementary rights of seven crores of Indians, thousands of "Mother Indias" would not suffice.

Mr. Malaviya knows well that if the supposed Brahmins do not willingly grant some liberties to the "Untouchables" now, just to conjure them and keep them inside the Hindu fold, they will one day revolt at a stroke and destroy every bit of supremacy the Brahmins have at present. That is why Mr. Malaviya pleads for the removal of untouchability.

When we examine our Malaviyas and the Madras shastris in the light of their own shastras we are compelled to call them 'pure chandalas'. If the Brahmins do not live up to the ideals of their shastras, i.e. their "Jathy Dharma" they are worse chandalas than the born chandalas, says the shastras. Does the Brahmin live up to his "Jathy Dharma"? Does Mr. Malaviya live up to his shastric ideals? The Madras shastris proved that Mr. Malaviya went against the shastras by his arguing against them. Then what about the Brahmins who are hotel keepers, toddy shop owners, excise officers, brokers and of other descriptions who do not live up to their "Jathy Dharma?" The rest of the Brahmins who mingle with the above said Brahmins in inter-marriages and inter-dining are also out of the way. Likewise if we go on with the shastras before us we are to call all the Brahmins "chandalas" up from Pandit Malaviya down to the Kutty Pattar (*C. Rajagopachari – editors*). None need misunderstand us when we call Mr. Malaviya and others Chandalas that we mean that they are all low men. Because they demand us to acknowledge the authority of their shastras we have to judge them according to their own Shastras.

Respect towards the shastras is good and necessary shastras mean Right Knowledge. The right knowledge about each subject is its Shastra. The present Hindu shastras were written with the best knowledge available then, when they had their origin. Therefore it was quite natural that the people of those days adored them with due regard. After that the world proceeded outwards only. The standard of knowledge in every subject has gone up marvelously than that of the bygone days. So the best up to date knowledge available now in the world is the Shastra of the present day. With the development of knowledge the old shastras

naturally became invalid. It is ridiculous if we say that all shastras are as good as before. All religions believe that their respective Vedas are true to the very core. It is a mere superstition. The developed knowledge of present day has proved that that no one can find out any other books than the Vedas of different religions, which are full of absurd blunders, obscene and childish ideas. It is a pity if are to cling to the same old Vedas believing blindly in their divine origin. We should not discard the real shastras. Every book does not deserve to be implicitly followed just because it is an old one. Only "Right Knowledge" – it does not matter *when* it emanates – should be treated as *real shastra*. Such knowledge may come at any moment through anybody from any corner of the world. Shastras, we should not forget, are the outcome of human thoughts. We shall be saved to a great extent if we can rid ourselves of the blind belief that the Vedas and Shastras are written by Gods, deputies of Gods, and big men of supernatural knowledge and ability. The day of "The Search Light" has set in. Is it not wise to throw away the castor-oil lamp?

- *Revolt*, 30 June 1929

Notes to 1.6

1. These are the names of Non-Brahmin Congress activists in Tamil Nadu, equated here with Ravana's brother Vibishana, who forsook his sibling and joined Rama's army. For non-Brahmin ideologues, who considered Ravana the real hero of the Ramayana, his brother Vibishana, who went over to Rama's side became an apt symbol of betrayal.
2. The reference here is to the First Provincial Conference of the Self respect Movement held in 1929. This was a conference that comprised activists and supporters from the Tamil-speaking regions of the Presidency.
3. These are the names of prominent Tamil Non-Brahmin Congressmen. *Navasakti* and *Tamil Nadu* were Tamil dailies edited and run by T.V. Kalyanasundram and T. Varadarajulu Naidu respectively.
4. Ramavarma Thumpan was a leading member of the SNDP YOGAM.

2 ANTI-CASTE RADICALISM

2.1 Self-respecters and their Movement

Self-respect and the Elections

"A general election is at hand", says *The Freethinker* of London, "and this affords to all lovers of freedom of thought an opportunity to use their personal influence in the fight to secure that public administration shall be based upon justice to all citizens, independent of religious or other opinions." This should be the motto of the Self-respecters also, as regards the coming elections in our country. The strength of any movement lies for the most part, in its success at the polls. Generally speaking, the result of the elections is the index of public opinion. If there are Buddhists in the public bodies, it means Buddhism is in the air; if there are Theosophists it shows Theosophy has a great influence, and if there are Brahmins it indicates that Brahminism has taken hold of the land. Though we are aware of the many back-door methods, and mud-slinging ways adopted in the elections, it cannot be totally denied that in spite of these, the result of the elections has got its own meaning.

In as much as the elections are drawing near, the Self-respecters of our country have a similar duty to perform, as the Freethinkers of the West. The latter have proposed "to test and record the opinions of candidates on three important matters," namely, secular education, the Blasphemy laws and Broadcasting religion. As regards the first, the Free thinkers say, for nearly sixty years the state schools have been the cockpit in which the different sections of the Christian church have fought to gain supremacy. "The contest threatens to impose upon the public a larger measure of definite and dogmatic religious teaching which if becomes law, will take many years of hard fighting to effect the removal of the injustice." Here is a truth, an irrefutable truth for the self-respecters, to chew in. We have painfully realized how religion has wrought untold evils in our country. And the reason for it, we have seen, lies in the religious education given to young minds. The child which is taught about "God" and "Fate" from its sixth year cannot be expected to have any self confidence or perseverance. The child which is taught that the world is flat like a mat, and that it is carried by eight elephants or by a

thousand headed serpent, cannot be expected to have a knowledge of the world.

Is it not religion that is responsible for the rottenness of the minds of Satyamurtis and Ramachandras (*Brahmin Congressmen from Madras – editors)*? Are we not aware of the fact that the existence of 7 crores of the so-called untouchables, is due solely to the religious mindedness of the people? Here is then, the duty of the self-respecters to see that religious education is not given at least in the state aided schools. This can be effected only by sending self-respecters to the legislative and administrative bodies.

As regards the second, The *Freethinker* says, "the Blasphemy Laws are still un-repealed, and the Christian religion still occupies a privileged position before the law. It is true that prosecutions are today rare, but a law is never dead until it is repealed, and a recrudescence of religious bigotry might once more bring this instrument of religious oppression into active use "The code of Manu is a parallel to the above. Many of the Civil laws are based upon this code, which has been indisputably proved to be the outcome of the Brahminic supremacy. It is this Manudharma Shastra which is responsible for the hypocritical usage of the despicable word, "Sudra." Examples of unequal justice in the sphere of marriage, inheritance, etc. which are embodied in the Manu, and consequently introduced in the Statute books, are not found wanting. That these laws are detrimental to the interests of the 97 percent of the Hindus, needs no emphasis. The desire for repealing these unequal laws, and enacting a new code of equitable justice, has already been expressed by individuals as well as organizations. It is a matter of no mean importance that we the self-respecters are unanimous about the immediate necessity for wiping off the inequalities perpetrated by the code of Manu. This again can be effected only by those sincere self-respecters who have leisure to feel their shameful position in society.

Thirdly comes the question of broadcasting religion. "The Church in politics," says *The Freethinker*, "is one of the most fatal things that can overtake a country at any time; the history of every country in the world proves it." The same has taken another form in our land. Though the state does not directly participate in broadcasting religion, it cannot be gainsaid that politics is being allowed to be shaped by enthusiasts of religion. Let us take our province as an illustration. The Government in the name of "religious neutrality," are allowing the orthodox elements

to ride roughshod over the masses by opposing all measures which are intended for the amelioration of the oppressed communities. The Devadasis Bills have their Satyamurtis, and the Age of Consent Bills have their Ramachandras. We can imagine what part the self- respecters can play in the coming elections. We need not care to decide whether Mr. Tweedledum or Mr. Tweedledee shall put M.L.C. or M.L.A. at the end of his name. It may not be likely that the self-respecters are sufficiently organized to materially affect the totality of votes cast.

But there are other ways of serving the best interests of the community. *The Freethinker* suggests three questions to be put either orally or in writing to all candidates for election, and also enjoins its followers to put the questions to the candidates at a public meeting, so as to enhance the effect. Two of the questions are: "Will you, if returned to Parliament, support any measure designed to restrict the education given in all schools receiving state support to secular instruction in the sense indicated by the official code?" and "would you be prepared to vote for a Bill for the abolition of the Statute and common law of blasphemy?" This is the ideal before the self-respecters to be followed in the approaching elections. It may be that candidates who are in entire agreement with the principles of the Self-respect movement, may be found wanting. In such cases – which we are sure, are very rare – we have to make use of the best of what we have. Personalities or high-sounding titles must not receive attention. The self-respecters should make it their duty not to be enticed by the "gilt gingerbread phenomena of the worshipful sort." Many of us have lived long enough to realize that there is no danger of the immediate ruin of the country whatever political party is returned at the head of affairs. The members of the self-respect movement should be ashamed of being threatened by the spectre of party names. We should not budge an inch from the noble principles set down by our league, for the favour of individuals or parties. Our one aim must be to work for the realization and achievement of our humanitarian precepts, and not the mere success of any party. Therein lies the sincerity and the future of the movement. Let us not lose this splendid opportunity of echoing the spirits of the people, which like wild fire, has spread far and wide. We strongly invite our youths, "to strive, to seek, to find and not yield."

- *Revol*t, 29 May 1929

Rakshasas

"Truth sits upon the lips of dying men," is the famous adage. The orthodoxy of our Province, which is drawing one of its last oaths, is giving out many truths. One such given out by one of our contemporaries, which writing on the Self respecters says:

"The Self-respecters, like the Rakshasas and Asuras of the Ramayana, try to set at naught all the time honoured customs and practices of the Asthika Hindus and would gain a victory as Ravana and his company had at the hands of Sri Rama."

Apparently, the Brahmin is unconsciously vomiting his poison. We have time and again pointed out in these columns, how the Ithihasas were written by Brahmins, and how the historical fight between the Aryans and the Non Aryans have been developed into a long story with full of exaggerated personalities incidents and descriptions.

That is almost the verdict of all the historians that have written the history of India. It is not our purpose here to justify this opinion with reasons. For, it is idle to quarrel over the past recriminations. It is commonly accepted by all as an eminent Tamil Scholar remarks that "if the three stages of the British conquest are, *merchant, missionary and monarch*, the three stages of the Aryan predominance are, *rishi, ritual and rupture*." We have to refer to this fact for the reason that the Brahmins have not yet left their habit of indulging in figurative descriptions and representations. However they may try to express philosophic interpretations of the puranas, the underlying fact unconsciously breaks out at times. It is a matter of no small surprise that in this era of advanced western civilization, an English journal launches upon the shameless remark that the Self-respecters are like the Rakshasa of old. The description of the Rakshasas as depicted in the Ithihasas and the puranas, is so fantastic and repulsive that any decent man will be led to hate them. Those attributes, we are given again by the very descendants of the Suras. Ravana and his people prevented the Aryans from performing bloody sacrifices in their land in defiance of the Brahminic outbursts. When they encountered strong opposition, there ensued fierce battles between them. If the Aryans wanted to establish their custom of drinking and sacrifices, the Non-Aryans also fought for the same. These incidents on different occasions by different persons, were afterwards manufactured into puranas and Ithihasas, whose authority was taught to be unquestionable.

That is what our contemporary means when it says that the Self-respecters are like the Asuras of the Ramayana. The charge that is hurled against us is that we try to set at naught all the time honored customs and practices of the Asthika Hindus. We are anxious to know what makes our Brahmin contemporary to be so anxious about the "Asthika Hindus," Who are the Hindus? We ask. We give below some of the authoritative texts, both official and non-official. "A Hindu is a native Indian believer in Brahminism," "One, esp. Aryan of N. India who professes Hinduism," "One who follows any method of Brahminical rites, ceremonies or worship."

Now, then whom does the journal refer to, as the "Asthika Hindus?" Is it not the Brahmins themselves? The Self-respecters are out to destroy Brahminism and has gone far in their destruction. If Brahminism means Hinduism, as it really is, then it will also be hurled down. If again Brahminism means "Asthigam" as our contemporary rightly observes, that will also receive the blow. Whether the self-respecters are called Rakshasas or ordinary men, whether the founder is called a Ravana, or an *avatar*, whether there is written another Ramayana or not, the Self-respecters, especially the younger generation of them are out to destroy Brahminism in all its aspects; and when once the blow is dealt, everything that is connected with it is bound to go. The country has reached the final stage when "atheism" can no longer frighten the people. Let not the *Sanatanists* play their game of mud slinging and double dealing.

- *Revolt,* June 30, 1929

Political Non-Brahminism and the Self Respect Movement:

Some Implications of Democracy

(By R. K. Shanmukham M.L.A)

"To be a democrat is not to decide on a certain form of human association; it is to learn how to live with other men"– Mary P. Folle

Whatever might be the differences of opinion as to the exact measure of self government to be attained by India – Dominion Status or Independence – it is agreed on all hands that the form of Government to be established must be democratic. Democracy is now recognized to be a sort of ultimate good which it would be impious to challenge or even to criticize. The grant of Adult suffrage recommended in the Nehru Report is a characteristic proof of the faith of the Indian intelligentsia in Democracy, and is a convincing answer to those critics who find in the agitation for Indian self government a Machiavellian plot by a microscopic minority to consolidate its own power.

While the genuine faith of the educated Indian in the democratic principle cannot be questioned by the fair minded critic, it would be pertinent to ask whether the average Indian possesses those qualities, which are necessary for the successful working of democratic institutions. This brings us to the fundamental question 'what is democracy'? In popular discussion the word 'democracy' has obtained a connotation exclusively political and denotes a form of Government in which the ultimate control of the machinery of the State is committed to a numerical majority of the people. But democracy is not merely a form of Government. According to Lord Morley "in its broadest and deepest, most comprehensive and most interesting sense, democracy is the name for a certain general condition of society, having historic origins springing from circumstances and the nature of things, not only involving the political doctrine of popular sovereignty by (but) representing a cognate group of corresponding tendencies over the whole field of moral, social and even spiritual life within the democratic community".

If Democracy then denotes more the form of a Society than that of political machinery, the foundations of a democratic State are to be laid in the character of its citizens rather than in the clauses of a constitution. It may be possible to create political safeguards against the exploitation

of the masses by a class, but the ultimate safeguard for democracy itself must depend upon the extension of its principles and ideals into every region of life.

The modern conception of democracy starts from a recognition of the equal intrinsic worth of every individual soul, but the recognition of this principle would be worse than useless if it is not applied in practice to every walk of life. Our democrats must realize that the mere grant of the franchise to every adult citizen does not by itself establish that condition of equality which is an indispensable concomitant of a democratic society. The Indian Nationalist who upholds the doctrine of political equality does not realize the inconsistency of his position when he deliberately denies social equality to millions of his fellowmen. This accounts for the strange fact that many Indian "Nationalists" who are political extremists are at the same time social reactionaries. The conception of social inequality which is a product of the caste system is the very negation of the Democratic Idea. In this sense, whatever might be the historical justification of the caste system, it is the antithesis of and a direct menace to Democracy in India. An uncompromising fight against the caste system is a necessary corollary to the acceptance of the Democratic idea. It is said "that the ultimate battle ground of the Democratic ideal is in men's hearts". What is wanted in India is a real "change of heart" in this behalf. It will not do merely to pay lip service to the ideals of democracy; or even to accept them in a spirit of pious sentimentalism. "To the idealistic temper we must attach the pragmatic habit and translate our doctrines into concrete programmes of emancipation and co-operation". "Enter Democracy, exit caste" must be the motto of every Indian nationalist.

If it is conceded that caste is inconsistent with democracy, it follows that a social revolution must be brought about in order to make India safe for democracy. Historically the democratic movement in the world began with such a social revolution. The first great turning point in the history of modern democracy began with the Protestant Reformation with its fight against ecclesiastical authority and the domination of the priestly class. The French Revolution affirming the political liberty of the citizen against the power of an aristocracy marks the second phase. The Russian Revolution and the movement for the emancipation of the working classes mark the third period in which the foundations of economic freedom are sought to be laid. It might be said that these three battles of democracy – the social, the political and the economic

– are being fought side by side in India. The awakening of the so-called "depressed classes" and the various movements of Social Revolt especially in South India are the visible manifestations of the attack against the citadel of caste in which the most dangerous enemy of democracy is entrenched. With the successful storming of that citadel, success in the other two theatres of war will be assured.

The affirmation of the doctrine of equal worth of every individual soul does not by any means imply that every individual is endowed with equal capacity. It is only meant to emphasise that the fact of unequal capacity cannot and should not be a ground for denying fair and equal opportunity for every individual. While the justice of this plea is easily recognized, it is not by any means easy to translate it into practice. Very often the fair field given to everyman has in practice resulted in creating an open field for the strong man with the result that the multitude is exploited and new forms of privilege are created. This danger to democracy is specially marked in our country where an iniquitous social system has relegated whole classes of the community in age-long subjection – and in some cases – degradation. The practical applicability of the doctrine of "equal worth" in such cases is not an easy matter. It is this real and practical difficulty that has resulted in the claims put forward by various classes of people in India for specific measures of protection and special methods of treatment. It is not merely unwise but undemocratic to condemn such claims as being anti-national. Those who are against such special claims base their argument upon the ideals of Nationality borrowed from the West, but conveniently forget the fundamental differences that exist in the structure of society in India. To make matters worse, these very pseudo-Nationalists are very often the obstacles to any measure of social legislation or reform intended to remedy our social evils. It is no good denying admission to certain classes in public educational institutions and at the same time maintain that the Competitive Examination is open to every citizen irrespective of class or creed.

Viewed calmly without prejudice it would appear that the special claims of certain classes are nothing more than a demand for such measures as will neutralize the position of inequality in which they are placed. Such a demand is not merely just and reasonable but is eminently consistent with the implications of Democracy. The word Efficiency is always trotted out in discussions on such occasions. Speaking about the danger to socialism arising out of the doctrine of Efficiency, Professor

Hobhouse remarks, "Be that as it may, as the expert comes to the front and Efficiency becomes the watch word of administration, all that was human in socialism vanishes out of it … all the sources of inspiration under which socialist leaders have faced poverty and prison, are gone like a dream and instead of them we have a conception of society as a perfect piece of machinery, pulled by wires radiating from a single centre, and all men are either experts or puppets. Humanity, Liberty, Justice are expunged from the banner and the single word Efficiency replaces them." The implication of these remarks of Professor Hobhouse is that an over emphasis of the doctrine of Efficiency may endanger the very foundation of democracy. The true Democrat must realize that Efficiency and capacity are measures not of worth but of obligation; and that the Law of Life is mutual service.

If Democracy is looked upon merely as a political form or an economic scheme, it is bound to decline and die. If Democracy is to survive and triumph over the iniquitous Social System of India based upon caste, its essential spirit must capture our consciences and wills and must compel that personal practice in our everyday life without which democracy cannot live.

- *Revolt*, 12 December 1928

The Political Philosophy of the Self-Respect Movement

(By Miss Gnanam)

The Self-respect movement stands for the social regeneration of the masses and the classes. It stands for the creation of an ideal society built upon the bedrock of equality and fraternity in all the spheres of life. It aims at complete equality between man and man as well as man and woman. Religion as a power to meddle with and shape society is completely ignored. The Self-respect movement is nothing if it does not stand for complete secularization of life. "Religion is the opium of life". This is the guiding principle that shall shape the destinies of the Self- respect movement.

The relation of politics and political action to this movement is one which requires careful consideration. That the Self-respect movement is social in its outlook is true. But the political philosophies prevalent in our times are so chaotic that one does not clearly see the potentiality

of the Self-respect movement as a political factor as well. This does not mean that politicians do not recognize its soundness as a political creed, a stepping stone to political power. But we are of the opinion that the Self- respect movement is something more than a mere creed. It is a guiding political principle, a sound political philosophy.

Let us examine a little the political tenets prevalent in our times. The democratic systems of Government in vogue in the advanced countries of the west, the group or the federal system of Government prevalent in America, France etc., represent a political principle which is becoming day by day mere anachronisms. The Government of such groups can be defined as the counting of "heads". It is no wonder therefore, that such systems of Government, stinking as they do with social and religious superstition serve as fertilizers to the cropping up of "an abnormal race of unscrupulous people called politicians". Society is food for their political power. Such governing forces are mere bubbles on the surface. It does not in the least matter even if when they are pricked.

On the other hand the Marxian philosophy certainly aims at supplanting such political groups with powerful representatives of society. It does not care for the form but the principle is the only imminent thing. We may call this principle a political philosophy but it is built on the strong foundation of economic equality. This is the only principle that guides the society and religion has absolutely no place. This is the other extreme of political reaction. This movement aims at leveling down human beings to the status of economic machines. Human instincts, human needs, biological factors etc., that make an individual's life worth living are sacrificed for the purpose of erecting a socio-political machine.

On the other hand, the Self-respect movement wants to build up a government on the ideals of a social principle already enunciated. The method of political action adapted to the tenets of the Self respect movement is therefore a process of elimination and persuasion. Politics pledged to religious neutrality in national life and the method of least resistance in social reformation have no place in Self-respect politics. The Self-respect movement raises a standard of revolt against such socio-political parties whose cry of nationalism is but an election stunt. Nationalism with religion and social inequalities is but another name for gilded slavery, while communalism eschewed of its religion and its

concomitant social superstitions is liberty cent percent. Battles fought in the name of nationalism are no more than swords brandished in the air, while even mild strokes aimed at social superstitions on the basis of the Self-respect movement will usher in a new era in the political life of a country.

Communal representation is the immediate expediency in the political action of the Self-respectors. It may be argued the communalism is built up on the basis of religious and social superstitions. It must also be borne in mind that communalism is the direct outcome of religious domination. We must strike at the root of this immoral domination. How can you do it but by mobilizing all our forces against a set of unscrupulous men, who are trading upon the religious power already conferred to them through age long frauds. Revolt against such a race is essential to wrest political power from them. Revolt is also essential to help the process of education which alone can help us in the rebuilding of a Self-respecting society.

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929

The Self-Respect Movement

(Mr. R. K. Shanmukham's Reply to Critics)

Addressing a public meeting at Virudunagar under the auspices of the Non Brahmin Youth League, Mr. R.K. Shanmugam M.L.A. made a reply to his critics and explained how he had not sacrificed consistency in holding the office of Secretary of the Swarajist party in the Assembly and mingling with the Self Respect movement.

The Youth Movement, he said had been growing during the last 10 or 15 years in all countries of the world. That nations like Turkey and China had asserted their freedom and equality of status with the other nations of the world was due to the awakening of the youth of those countries. So also the national awakening of this country would depend in large measure on the strength of the youth organization.

He wanted to take this opportunity of replying to certain criticisms which had been leveled against him because of his support to the Non Brahmin Self-respect movement while holding a responsible post in the Congress. He had explained his attitude towards the Self-respect movement several times but he thought he might explain his position a little more clearly now. He would make bold to say that there was

nothing inconsistent between the Congress policy and the principles of the Self-respect movement. He would boldly assert that anyone gainsaying this would be a false Congress man. He would go further and say that when it was made clear to him that the Congress stood opposed to that movement he would be prepared to resign his membership of the Congress. But he was sure that no close student of the Congress movement would say that the Self-Respect movement was opposed to the Congress creed. He believed that the Congress was the forerunner of the present Self-respect movement and that it was because the Congress had committed the initial blunder of paying attention to the political self respect of the country to the exclusion of communal and social self respect that the present Self-Respect movement had become imperative.

The Congress itself though it began as an organization for reforming society had been changing its creed, until to day has as its goal the attainment of Swaraj by all legitimate peaceful and non violent means. The speaker believed that this was incomplete and with this view he had sent up an amendment to the Congress creed a few years ago urging that it should also extend to the eradication of communal differences and inequalities. He therefore believed that if the Self-respect movement did not run its full course, these would be a great hindrance to our national growth. The Non Brahmin movement, he said was a social rather than a political revolt. Brahmin ascendancy was as old as the day of Vasishta and Viswamitra. Viswamitra, a Non-Brahmin established his equality with Vasishta himself and owing to the tactfulness of Vasishta all further trouble was averted. But such tactfulness was not present among the Brahmins nowadays. Even if the Brahmins acceded to the equality of status of all castes there was necessity for the Self-Respect movement for the purpose of educating the Non Brahmins to a realization of their equality of status.

The speaker next explained the significance of the Chingleput Self Respect conference and said that they were most reasonable. He denied that some of the resolutions tended towards atheism or heterodoxy.

In conclusion he characterized Mr. E.V. Ramaswami Naicker as the author of a social upheaval comparable to the French Revolution.

Do none but the Brahmins engage study?

Do none but the Khasatriyas exercise sway?
Do Vysias plough and Sudras only.
These greedy liars propagate deceit.
And fools believe the fictions they. (sic)

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929

Jainism and the Self-Respect Movement

(By "Self Respector")

Ever since I became a follower of the Self-respect movement, I was thinking if there existed any movement in ancient India which advocated the principles for which the movement stands at present. I am a student of philosophy and religion and I take pleasure in studying books on comparative religion. For nearly a year I have been studying some books on Jainism. While I was going through those books I was extremely glad and very much surprised to find the Jaina teachings to be the same as those of the Self- respect movement.

For the information of the readers I give below some of the grand and sublime teachings of Jainism.

1. The Jaina thinkers do not belive in an anthropomorphic God who creates, rules and destroys the world.
2. God according to Jainism is any perfect soul that has realized the Divinity in itself. You and I can become God by our own efforts.
3. Every man is the architect of his own life. He is alone responsible for his happiness or misery.
4. Every man is endowed with infinite energy which he is at liberty to use.
5. Social, economic, political or even spiritual emancipation of a nation or community is in the hands of its movements.
6. The world is eternal and matter is indestructible.
7. Jainism does not believe in any of the superstitious beliefs of Hinduism.
8. The Jains do not believe in *Piturloka* or *Shraddas.*

9. They have no caste among them. They hold that even the son of a "Pariah" should be respected as god if he has right perception.
10. They do not admit the Brahmins into their houses or temples and do not seek their help for any ceremony.
11. They do not accept the Vedas, Puranas, Smritis or any of the Brahminical books.
12. They lay much stress on individual exertion. "If you want to be happy, you must work. Neither Rama, Krishna nor Christ can help you"
13. Their first teaching is, "Be kind to all beings, respectful to those that are righteous, merciful to those that are perversely inclined."

The teachings of Jainism are in short, based upon Commonsense, Reason and Logic.

- *Revolt*, 23 June 1929

2.2 Organising for Self-respect

Duties of a Revolutionary (1)

(Periyar E.V. Ramasami)

It would have been more appropriate if you could have chosen as your president one who is a firm believer in social reform. I am fast losing my faith in social reform as an agency for the regeneration of our country. The advancement of the country can only be through social revolution born of invincible courage and undaunted boldness. I have arrived at this conclusion after long and patient deliberations. I beg to tell you that I am endeavouring to serve the country by destroying the useless and harmful undergrowth that is threatening its very life. Society in my humble opinion, has degenerated to an extent which it is impossible to remedy by social reform. The much talked of social reform of the present day is one of the crafty weapons of the educated and the wealthy classes who are competing with one another in an attempt to gain popularity and influence over the people. Such methods of social reform are not intended to confer any benefit on those whose welfare they are apparently intended. These methods are adopted to serve the selfish interest of those so-called reformers themselves. But those whose lot requires to be bettered always believe in the genuineness of these reformers. And the result of it all is that day by day, their condition is growing worse, they are degenerating into a state from which they cannot be reformed and uplifted easily. The chief reason for this is the fact that those set of people whose attitude of mind towards society brought about the degeneration of certain classes which need reformation at present, those class of people to whose selfish activities much of the unsettled condition of our society is due – it is these men who are now working and benefiting by their work in the department of social amelioration.

The most important of the evils that stare us in our face is that which is responsible for the division of the people into superiors and inferiors in society on the basis of birth. These evils have come to exist in our country on account of the fact that they have been established in the name of religion, God and heaven. The anxiety to reform society and purge it of its evils was in the minds of men long ago. It might be said that Buddha, Ramanuja and Thiruvalluvar were the foremost in their

age to attempt something in this direction. But it cannot be said that in these directions there has been the least progress which redounded to the benefit of society from the efforts made from that time onwards till now. It is impossible for our people to effect anything by social reform, because the sentiments of religion and the veneration of God have been so inextricably connected with these superstitious ideas and beliefs. But this state of things is advantageous to some sets of people, and that is the reason, I think, for the failure of the efforts to improve the condition of the people.

It is not an easy task to enunciate more wise theories or do more strenuous work than was done by Buddha, Kapilar, Thiruvalluvar, Ramanuja and others. That is the reason why the opponents of social reform have strong belief in their obstructive propaganda. The feelings towards religion and the attitude towards God have been built on the foundations of ignorant belief and blind faith. Worshipping God out of blind belief, man has come to accept and live according to many of the purblind conceptions of religion.

To say that ignorant belief and blind faith should be destroyed is national service destined for the benefit of humanity. People have for a very long time been carrying on this propaganda with caution, patience, love, sympathy, good words and persuasive arguments. What has been the result of their attempts? How long we are going to be experimenting like this? We find that such propaganda is done by people who are anxious to ingratiate themselves into the good books of the opponents of social reform and gain popularity and prestige as reformers. It is also due to a lack of courage to push onward on the part of the reformers. Some people might quote the opinions of Swami Vivekananda, Gandhiji and others to disprove my contentions. I frankly accept that my opinions are opposed to theirs. Some people say, "Do not destroy the old symbolisms, the ancient pictures and the hoary traditions and culture". Such things which these people want to foster are responsible for the degeneration of our country and demoralization of our people, and this we must impress on the mind of every reasonable man by our propaganda work. Otherwise, a state of things will come into existence from which it will be well nigh impossible to obtain liberation and salvation.

For instance, Ramanuja with a view to reform society and at the same time preserve the old symbols, caught hold of many of those who were called "Pariahs" and put the "namam" on their foreheads and

invested them with the sacred thread so as to bring about equality in society. The old symbols were no doubt preserved, but did the people get equality! Were the followers imbued with the feelings of fraternity?

Let us take the temples of the land. Instead of being a symbolical abode of the supreme being, they have degenerated into dens of all kinds of iniquity and hotbeds of vice. Even in the case of ancient culture, the art and the paintings, it will be clear that they also stand in the way of social reform. What benefit have the Vedas and the Puranas conferred on mankind? What have the people gained by reading the Bharatham, the Ramayanam, Siva Puranam, Vishnu Puranam, Thiruvidayal Puranam *et hoc genus omne?* Consider whether you do not find in these books doctrines which go against the principles of human conduct and human character, and do you think that some of the worst books and worst set of people could be guilty of graver wrongs and more serious crimes than some of those mentioned in these books? Also seriously consider the fact whether these old books do not stand in the way of social reform. Do not the social reactionaries quote from these texts and these scriptures and cite authorities to support their position? It is said that there are some passages in these books which support the standpoint of the reformers. In my opinion, this is empty talk to deceive gullible people. I feel that so long as the people want to hang to these scriptures, so long will be they be unable to achieve success in their efforts to reform society. I have not come here to speak about God, I think the less we speak about Him, the better it will be for us.

So far as religion is concerned, there is no paucity of propaganda and publicity. Every man believes that it is only through his religion that salvation could be reached. Why should there be so much competition between religions? When we deeply consider all this, it would be clear that religion is an absurdity. But if it is considered that religion is an institution brought into existence so as to define certain rules and draft certain regulations for the better functioning of society, then it may be entitled to some consideration. But then religion should change according to the needs and requirements of the times, but if the word of God or preachings of the son of God or the doctrines of the messenger of the Almighty are as sacred and sacrosanct as God himself then the paramount duty of social reformers is to abolish and destroy those religions. The principle of social reform is the principle of adoption to the changing conditions of the times. And so the social reformer should not flinch in destroying at once the things which would

not change according as the changed conditions of the world require.

The next thing that the social reformers should devote their attention to is that of the relationship between man and woman. In our society women are being treated worse than untouchables. Women are considered to be slaves of men. If such a system has been made by God, the first thing that we should do is to destroy that God. It is a great pity that so many things should be foisted upon the devoted head of poor God. Especially in our country, the position of our womenfolk is the worst that could be thought of. Chastity is considered to be the foremost duty of women. The gods that men worship have been symbolized as having their wives on their hands, tongue or shoulders.

But the people have not learnt chivalry from their Gods and do not treat their women with decency. As a result of the slavery of women, children are bred up as slaves and the whole country is enslaved. If we are to be free, we must free our women who must be allowed the same liberty and the same privileges as our men. Women must depend upon themselves for their emancipation from their slavery and should boldly come forward and break their bonds. Turkey, Afghanistan and China are standing examples of women achieving their freedom.

I would next draw your attention to the most inhuman institution of widowhood by which our sisters are subjected to untold hardships. We fail to understand why the ancients created this institution. It could not be because, there was surplus womanhood in our country in those days. For our Gods had not less than two wives each, and our kings married a thousand, a ten thousand, and a sixty thousand wives at a time! Probably our forefathers intended the institution of widowhood in order to make provision for the need of the Sanyasis and the guests to whom hospitality had to be extended as a religious duty. Whatever be the reason, this institution has done incalculable harm to the womanhood of the country, and deserve to be abolished without a moment's delay. In this connection, I would appeal to the widows themselves to take courage in both their hands and workout their own salvation. They should not be deterred by the shame and obloquy that society may heap upon them, and should come forward to choose husbands and publish their choice before the world. An exhibition of courage in this matter, even by a few widows, would serve as an object lesson for the others, and would pave the way for the coming

generations. I would also appeal to those women who are not widows to lend a helping hand to their suffering sisters who are unfortunate enough to be widowed. The wives should help the widows to secure husbands for the latter and lend a hand at the purification of society and creation of a healthy moral atmosphere for their husbands and their children.

Distinctions of caste were created in our society at a time when the strong man oppressed the weak. The continuance of these distinctions, is evidence of the fact that we have not advanced from the stage of barbarism. No reasons have so far been urged to prove the superiority of one man to another by the right of his birth alone. Morality and intellect are not the outcome of one's birth. The division of caste by birth has been condemned by almost all the reformers and the concomitant evils of caste system have been contemned for many years. All has been in vain. I strongly believe that this monstrosity cannot be wiped off by means of preachings to the masses. The only way to get rid of the scourge is by legislation and communal representation in the services. This may seem paradoxical to you. I shall explain my position. If communal representation is granted, there will be no chance for the privileged classes to ride rough shod over the oppressed. Politicians object to the idea of communal representation in services urging that it would disunite the people. When we express our wish to gather the conflicting elements of society into a harmonious whole there is the rub. The religionists raise their hue and cry. If we attempt to remove the obstacles of religion from our path by means of legislation, the so called religious teachers and Achariyas raise their vehement protestations. If we heed to the voice of religion and desist from amalgamating the communities but keep them separate there is enough justification for communal representation.

Now to the curse of untouchability. Our country has the monopoly for see-me-not-isms and touch-me-not-isms. A country where there is a class of people who are not entitled to walk in public streets, who are not allowed to worship God in their own temples, who are prevented from using the common wells and tanks – such a country may as well be destroyed by an earthquake, burnt out by a volcano, or submerged by the ocean. If God is all merciful, He should have obliterated our country long a ago. Is it not shameful on the part of such a country to aspire for Swaraj, Dominion Status or complete Independence? Politicians may say, that untouchability will go if we get Swaraj. To

them I say not merely Swaraj but Dharma Raj, Rama Raj, Harichandra Raj and the Raj of the very Gods – these were responsible for originating and organising this blot on humanity. It these governments come to life once again, I fear the position of this class would become unredeemable. I appeal to the reformers both social and political to carry on the mission of removing the sin of untouchability and clean our society of the dirt that has accumulated for centuries.

Another important thing that needs mention is education. True education is that which imparts knowledge on human nature. Tiruvalluvar says, "however educated one may be, if one does not adjust himself to the world current, he is worse than an illiterate". The education that is now obtained in schools and colleges is useful to produce slaves, who are helping the foreign domination. It is sheer nonsense that devotion to God, devotion to religion and devotion to king should be taught in schools. If they deserve any devotion at all let them earn it by displaying their intrinsic merit. My ardent wish is that no education be imparted to the communities from which the intelligentia of the land have sprung up. I like to see the existing schools and colleges closed at least for a period of fifteen years and the ladies and the illiterate communities imparted the true education referred above. This is the first duty of any good Government and all sincere reformers.

- *Revolt*, 5 and 12 December 1928

The South Indian Social Reformers Conference

Resolutions

The following are among the resolutions passed in the above Conference:-

1. All distinctions based on birth should be abolished.
2. Equality between the sexes should be established including rights to property, inheritance, etc.
3. The widow should inherit all the property of her husband, in case of both the divided and undivided families.
4. The institution of Devadasis (professional prostitutes) should be abolished forthwith. This Conference strongly condemns the

attitude of some members in the legislature who opposed the measure incorporating this reform.

5. Compulsory elementary education should be enforced in all areas irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Special facilities should be extended to children of the depressed classes of school-going age by providing free boarding, free supply of books and other materials necessary for the prosecution of their study.

6. In the School Curricula all references to and advocacy of religions and puranas which instill superstitious beliefs into the young minds should be carefully eschewed.

7. The text-books which are prescribed for the students should not contain anything calculated to promote blind beliefs and superstitious ideas. The books should encourage the exercise of common-sense and the spirit of self-confidence and perseverance in the students.

8. In the training schools, especially where pundits specialize in their mother tongues, text books referring to religion and puranas should not be prescribed.

9. Entrance to temples and public resorts should not be denied to anyone on the basis of caste; and the graduated distinctions in the treatment of worshippers within the temples should be abolished.

10. Steps should be taken for the establishment of maternity and child welfare homes throughout the country.

Tributes

In proposing Mr. E.V. Ramasami Naicker to the chair of the South Indian Social Reformers' Conference held at Madras, on November 26th, many kind things were said of him by the leaders of South India. We offer the following extracts to those, who, out of selfish motives, not only defame the personality of Mr.Ramasami Naicker, in season and out of season, but will belittle the results of his services in the cause of social reform:

Hon. S. Muthia Mudaliar, Minister for Health: I am sure that Mr. E.V. Ramasami Naicker whose influence is felt not only by the Tamils of this province, but by the people of all parts of India and Ceylon will

ably guide the proceedings of this Conference.

Mr. R.K. Shunmukham Chetty, M.L.A: Mr.Naicker has accomplished in the field of social reform in comparatively fewer years a good deal more than what many other social reformers have achieved during the last twenty five years. He has laid his finger at the right root of our social degeneration. He is the only reformer whose words I accept to the last syllable.

The Raja Saheb of Panagal: My esteemed friend Mr. E.V. Ramasami Naicker is the greatest social reformer of modern times. To him the cause of social reform is sacred. You know he has been to jail several times in fighting for what he considered to be a right cause. He is prepared to make any sacrifice, nay lay down his life, if by doing so, he could advance the cause of social reform. He has realised that social reform should precede political reform, that before India could win Swaraj, a great deal has to be done to improve the social conditions of the people.

Sri K.V. Reddi, Agent General for South Africa: One who will succeed in social work should possess courage, ability to sacrifice and knowledge of ways and means, you will have to search the whole of South India to find another man like Mr. Naicker who can claim to possess these qualities in an equal degree. Mr. Naicker has a lion's heart. Fear he knows not. He is ready for any sacrifice. His methods of procedure are the best. He uses his pen like a sword only with greater results, more visible and more durable.

Mr. Kumarasami Reddiar, M.L.C: Mr. Naicker is frank in his opinions. He says what he thinks and does what he says.

Mr. A. Ramasami Mudaliar, President, Corporation of Madras: Twenty five years ago we were concerned with the educated classes. But Mr. Naicker has not cared to touch the educated classes who are determined not to be reformed. He has cast his lot with those who are illiterate and ignorant. And I tell you, that is the main reason for his success. To stir the peaceful, pathetic contentment of the masses, to touch their hearts – that has been the work of Mr. Naicker. He has rejuvenated this presidency in a manner in which it has never been done, drawn all the fire and enthusiasm of the younger generation and of the older generation also. He is so blunt and straightforward that he spares nobody, even people like the Raja of Panagal and Mahatma Gandhi. His has become a household name not only in Madras but in other provinces.

Hon. Dr. Subbaroyan, Chief Minister: I have had a lurking affection for my revered friend and leader, Mr. Naicker for the reason that he is one of those who do not mind expressing their views even though such expressions may hurt for the time being the hearers. He is the fitting president for this conference in that, he immediately undertakes to put in action what he preaches.

Mr. N. Sivaraj, M.L.C: I have to pay my tribute to Mr. Naicker's work for the betterment of the depressed classes.

Rev. Bitman: Mr. Naicker is the young man of South India.

Maulana Muhammad Khuddus Sahib: Mr. Naicker will light the way for us all towards liberty, equality and fraternity.

- *Revolt*, 11 December 1928

The Work Ahead

The Self-respect movement has drawn under its banner a band of brave men and women who have dared to stake their all in an attempt to rid Indian society of the corrupting influences that have infested it from the beginning of times and have steadily eaten into its vitals. The Self-respect league has endeavoured to bring into existence a new order which will not cramp people's lives and will not exploit their ignorance. The results are already encouraging. The common people are awakening to a sense of their human rights which have been kept back from them by a self-seeking tyranny extending its sway through the ages. Tradition and authority are fast losing their hold on the popular mind and vested interests everywhere are slowly but steadily going to the wall. Indians are coming into their own and their heritage cannot be held away from them any longer. The time spirit is working in favour of the Reformer and overt opposition to the movement of progress and enlightenment is crumbling into the dust.

Chingleput will be the first meeting place of workers from all parts of the provinces, who have, till now, struggled each in his or her own way, unknown to each other and unknown to fame, in a cause dear to the heart of all (*the reference is to the First Self-respect Conference – editors*). Chingleput will mark a new stage in the movement for social reconstruction. We shall pool our resources and organize our strength for an advance *on masse*. We shall no longer rest content which individual efforts and petty skirmishes. We shall carefully measure the ground to be traversed, take an accurate stock of our resources in men and material

and draw up a scientific programme, complete in all its details. We should warn the delegates at Chingleput not to indulge in wild and fruitless talk. We should not have a plethora of wordy resolutions. Let us profit by the failures of others who were enticed by words and were victims to verbal warfare. A simple, concise resolution must embody a precise, dynamic programme capable of enlisting all our available energies, giving free scope for all our different natures. There is an abundance of enthusiasm available in our province today, especially throughout the Tamil districts. Let us have the foresight to yoke it to a programme of systematic, continuous action.

The ideal in front of us is quite clear and need not be debated upon. The lines of advance will, of course, be different with the differing personalities and will change with the changing times. But the direction of progress is permanent and may there be indicated. The superiority complex, the superstition of heredity, the institution of samskaras, the doctrine of karma and reincarnation, idolatry and its twin brother priestcraft, symbolism and ceremonials, these are some of the landmarks of the old world which should be obliterated before laying out the ground for the new edifice. The abolition of untouchability and emancipation of women will be impossible until we rid people's minds of the notion that there are special virtues attached to birth. Caste is a graded system of merits deriving sanction from a false doctrine of heredity.

Man's faith in his own superiority keeps the woman behind the purdha, denies her personal and property rights and treats her as mere chattel. The samskaras make marriage a mockery and blast the idealism of youth. The doctrines of karma and reincarnation have condemned the masses to eternal apathy and we should lay the axe at the fundamentals of this belief if we would arouse a national consciousness in our people. No Indian can lift his head up the demand equal treatment from foreigners as long as he permits his people to indulge in primitive symbolism, ritualism and necromancy. We are astonished that in this age of enlightenment, cultured men and graduates of universities are not ashamed to disfigure their foreheads with caste marks. The 'sacred' thread across the shoulders may symbolize superiority but it certainly is a flagrant denial of the wearer's manliness. The *homa* and the muttering at Sradh, birth, marriage and death ceremonies warp the imagination and engulf the mind in utter darkness. A civilized society will penalize the performance of rituals. Burning at the stake is hardly adequate

punishment of the practice of such witchcraft. The orgies, the ugliness and the filth of our festivals were hardly rivaled by any people in the world at any time in history. Festivals should yield place to holidays for health and recreation. Idolatry is the perennial source of all vices. He who would defend the honour of his country should break the stones, he should melt the images and utilize the metal for making tools and machinery. Religious endowments should be diverted for nation-building activities. Mutts should be converted into schools and colleges. Temples should be transformed into hospitals. We should abolish priests and no longer fear hell fires.

The practice of astrology, soothsaying and other black arts should be penalised. We should abolish Sanskrit and prohibit the study of the Vedas and Puranas. We should cultivate the current languages and encourage the study of the science and technology. We should prohibit the feeding of idle Brahmins but should ensure all against unemployment and old age. We should abolish sweating and guarantee a just distribution of national wealth. We should abolish monopolies and organize an economic system which will allow scope for the free growth of industries on a self-governing basis. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but it indicates the characteristic features of the direction in which an immediate advance is possible. The Chingleput conference will have served its purpose if it will evolve an organization virile enough and strong enough to sustain and direct such an advance.

– *Revolt*, 13 February 1929

A Fitting Reply

We draw the attention of our readers to the enlightening lecture delivered by Mr. A. Ramasami Mudaliar, the extract of which appears elsewhere in this issue. It is an answer to the doubts raised by the learned lecturer of the day, Mr. Sami Venkatachalam Chetty (2). We know how the resolutions of the Chingleput Conference are being misrepresented before the public by self-interested people. When such learned men like Mr.Chettiar misunderstand the purport of the resolutions, and entertain wrong opinions about them, it is no wonder that others who are less conversant with the actual state of affairs are being led by the nose. Mr. Mudaliar in his long speech has showed the justifications for some of the important resolutions passed at the Conference. He has very intelligently argued out the motives of the resolutions and has answered the questions commonly raised by a many. His causes for necessity of introducing reforms in society and religion should be carefully read by those who cry hoarse for leave-not-a-rack behind retention of the tenets of society and religion.

Presidential Address

Self-respect Conference Resolutions

We extract the following from the presidential address of Mr. A. Ramasami Mudaliar, at the second anniversary of the George Town Non Brahmin Social Club.

Varnashrama Dharma

Let me take the question of Varnashrama Dharma. It is not at the Self-respect conference at Chingleput for the first time that we have protested, revolted, refused to submit ourselves to a system which, whatever may be said in theory, is the most cruel and the most unjust of all social systems. I thought the days were long gone by, when at Theosophical meetings they used to compare the distinctions of caste in this country with the division of classes in England; it is an old and worn out argument. I know something about the distinctions of classes in England. I have been there myself, and my friend Mr. Sámi Venkatachalam Chetty will accept my view if he were to go to that place and see for himself those distinctions, especially after the war, in these democratic days. He would not then have so easily believed that Varnashrama Dharma distinctions were somewhat analogous to the

distinctions of classes in England. There is, no doubt, a great deal to be said in favour of democracy within castes and sub-castes which the lecturer has rightly touched upon; but that is not the subject of controversy at all. That system in society by which one community is at the apex and the other deep down in the bowels bearing the pressure of all the communities on the head whereby it is not possible for one community to raise to the stature which all other communities can get, whereby one community can have no wealth to offer, no responsibility, not even the Chief Ministership of the Government of Madras, or even the leadership of the Opposition – under that system, no one can secure for one belonging to that community that equality of treatment, that fairness of treatment, which we all deserve. That is the other side of the picture which I wish some of those who bolster up the Varnashrama Dharma system would look at. What is it that is comparable to that? No amount of influence, of wealth, of status which the mechanical world, the material world can give you that position which you have a right to occupy.

Exploiting Religion

Take the question of temple entry. It is going to be a very big question, a very serious question. Whether we like it or no, we are bound to be faced with it. Whether elections come and election prospects are to be dimmed by one attitude or by the other, I am confident that question is going to be a vital one which our society has to face. You talk of distinctions due to riches, due to position; but no distinction either by riches or by position can enable a member of one community to enter the temples of the land and worship that great God, who according to all canons of religion, by all hypotheses, knows no distinction of caste, no distinction by birth, by position and place. In the very name of that religion for which my friend has pleaded, I ask how you can justify a system which says "In the holy of holies, you can disallow a human being entering" (Shame!). There is no use crying "Shame". It is a system that has come to us and which we have to look at. It might have done good two thousand years ago. But today two thousand years latter, how has it worked? How does it crush the very life and blood and bone of the people who are the creatures of the system!! I trust I am a religious man. No conference, no resolution can make me give up that conviction. No leaders, no election prospects can make me give it up. I am a believer in religion. I believe in the Vedanta system. I have tried in my own

humble way to understand something of that religion; what does it teach?

"Man is the image of God; that in every person is that resplendent Being". If you are born in that very Vedanta principle, how comes it, I ask, that you can reconcile your religion, your faith in God with the distinctions which Varnashrama Dharma impose? Do you mean to suggest to me that the heterodox person who walks about in the streets and villages and who feels polluted even by the shadow of the Chandala and who is aghast at the idea of a Chandala entering the temple, that he is a religions person? Do you believe that man lives in the Vedanta principle which teaches that the same Divine Being dwells in the Chandala as in yourself?

My friends, what is it that the Varnashrama Dharma is doing today? Sree Krishna on the field of battle told Arjuna, "Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is full of evil" That is the maxim which you ought to follow. We are doing today somebody else's dharma, not our own. Society has been so confused and confounded that all other distinctions are taken away. I ask my friends who are still advocates of Varnashrama Dharma, whether, after all, in their mind of minds they have not got the idea that the system has been retained only because it confers certain temporary rights and privileges on particular sections of Society? Those who support this essentially undemocratic system are the very condemnation of the entire system. My friends, it is no use supporting a system which has proved by its methods and ways to be tyrannical. It may be that the class divisions in England and other countries are working well to a certain extent. But let us remember that there is a revolt against that very class system. What is the Soviet republic, though we are not prepared to accept it? It shows that there are people there who go against even those class divisions. What is the Labour Movement in England, except a revolt against class privileges and birth privileges? What do the move for the reform of the House of Lords and other progressive movement in Europe shows except that even those divisions are opposed and there is an attempt to reduce and minimize the recurrence of that very system? By all means, I do not want that we should substitute Varnashrama Dharma by another system where riches or some other thing should prevent man and man coming together. But the difficulty of finding an alternative solution cannot make us subscribe to the present evil system which we are all only too clearly seized of.

Caste Titles

All of us in our school and college days have prided ourselves on the fact that we are not a Mudaliar or Pillai; we remove them. I know how shy the students feel to be called like that. Later it gets tacked on to our names and we refuse to leave it after that stage. But I set no store by that – either the coupling of the title or the removal of the title. These are accidental things on which serious resolutions need not be passed. What they were against was not the possession of the title, but the spirit behind it, the spirit of exclusion perpetuating the divisions and sub-castes which is the result of having these caste titles appended to their names. At any rate, they felt so. They the organizers of the movement felt that if you kept on these titles, these caste appellations, the fundamental aim of their attempt to remove all caste distinctions will be hampered. I would not be uncharitable not to understand, even if we do not agree with them that there is some point in that view that the perpetuation of the caste system depends on the perpetuation of the caste titles that are essential features of the caste system. I shall not be uncharitable to think that these are ridiculous resolutions, passed by people with ridiculous notions. I think that in their effort to put down a great evil, they thought they should go to the logical conclusion, as they understood logic, of removing all even the caste appellations.

Marriage Reform

While I believe that the sanctity of marriage tie is such in this country that you cannot even think of divorce in ordinary events here, I am bound to say that, apart from the Self-respect people, in many parts of India the movement for some sort of divorce law is gaining ground. Touring round as a member of the Age of Consent Committee, we came across witness after witness who incidentally pleaded for divorce law. It seems to me therefore, that it is not an entirely correct picture to say that no reform of our marriage institutions is either desirable or practicable. The motive that animated them is not to enable young men to have a dozen wives. He can do so now under the Hindu law. That resolution has been put forward not from the view of man, but from the view of woman. She is there tied down to the husband under all circumstances for life. I do not want to go into gruesome details. But we know that under the modern Hindu system there are cases where the woman is the sufferer through and through. May it not be that the prompters of this resolution were moved to sympathy, to tears

by the position of some women or other who, tied down mercilessly and for ever to the husband who ill treats her brutally and openly lives with another to the disgust of the wife, to the discomfiture of the wife's well-wishers and her children who are shedding tears of blood day after day? May it not be they were thinking of some methods, some means by which this inexorable bondage which stands in the name of religion could be undone under whatever circumstance? If I know anything of their minds I can assure you it is not a resolution to enable men to live in adultery and immorality but to prevent man trying to live in that sort of immorality. What is the remedy under the Hindu law? Keeping a concubine in his own house is not considered a cruel thing under the Hindu law. Ill treating the wife, or abusing her is no reason why she can separate at all. Why so? When going into great details on a question like this, is it not obvious that the ideas of morality among Hindus with reference to women are entirely different from what they are with reference to men? Dare you deny it? I can assure you that resolution was meant for the protection of women, and not for the protection of the licentious men.

Intermediary in the Temple

When my friends passed the resolution not to spend a pie on the worship of God, I ask myself again what their object was. Never mind the literature around it; such literature grows round any resolution. We have to take the resolution as it is and as the lecturer pointed out, after all, it is no doubt an extreme position to say that money should not be spent on worship in Hindu temples. But you have to consider where does the money go by thousands? To whom does it go? Whom does it profit? Is it God? We must have an historical background in these matters. You had a new name to your Association. My friend Gadde Rangiah Naidu officiated at that. No man could have sat with greater dignity, with greater ease and with more grace. The very picture brought ideas of religion to me and I ask myself and I ask you whether that resolution does not merely mean: "Do not have an intermediary between man and God, do not waste time and money over an intermediary". Is not that how you have to interpret that resolution? They have put it an extreme form. If you once have an idea of the evils to be combated, you will find that the extenuating circumstances ought to be put in an extreme form on the other side. You cannot ever pick and choose to weigh finely in the balance to sugarcoat your resolutions. At any rate the organizers of the resolution thought so. In the tremendous upheaval

that is agitating society, those who drafted the resolution in that manner had to hammer at that great evil and they have succeeded. Asthiga Sanghams are growing up. That is exactly what we want. Tinnevelly is up, every one is trying to re-organize the temples (3). The fact has been brought forward to them in such an effective manner that "there is something rotten in the state of Denmark", that steps are to be taken to make people realize that there is a blot on the Hindu system, social and religious and that some men should go forward who will do their task and do it promptly. What does it matter to the people who have not their ideas in an extreme form to be told that they are misleading society? They have done their task; they have driven you to examine the whole position; they have made you realise that your religious system wants an examination; and while you were sleeping the need has arisen – if need be even to combat the Self-respect propaganda – that you should come forward with your views, with your ideals, with your facts of the religious and social system in the country. That I believe has been the result of their activities – a thing for which we have to be thankful, even though we disagree with those who are behind the resolution.

Rights, rituals, ceremonialism, intermediaries and thing like that which are not essentials of Hindu religion – to remove them and to restore the pristine purity of the great Religion are the purpose for which the conference has been organized. In any case whatever their objects may be, whatever the motives of those behind these resolutions be, let us take it that this is a great awakening for us, that it makes us more religious than we were before and to free our religion from the accidental circumstances that have surrounded it, and make it the purest and the noblest of all religions.

- *Revolt*, 10 April 1929

Iconoclasm: What It Means

***(Mr. C. S. Pani writes in the* Justice)**

I am constrained to offer to the public my few thoughts on a subject, which seems to me of the most vital consequences, the present attack on temple worship. Mr. Swami Venkatachalam during his lecture on the Self-Respect conference, pointed out much that was defective or objectionable in the resolutions passed at the conference. Whatever the nature of his criticisms on other resolutions might be, that relating

to Temple worship seems to me, to be woefully below the mark and to savour too much of what they call fighting in the last ditch. Mr. Swami seems to be quite a pitiful figure, having one leg in the very front of our political strife and the other in the extreme back woods of social reform. Undoubtedly the intermediary is an ugly feature of the temple; but he is by no means the one such feature. He is a part of the whole obscene drama that is enacted in temples of today. Before I attempt to reply to Mr. Swami's criticisms, I shall offer my few thoughts about the present decadent state of our religion.

It is clear as daylight to every common Hindu that our religion consists essentially of two aspects – the spiritual and the mythical. The spiritual aspect of our religion is indeed our true religion. It is founded on an indestructible rock of truth. It is the very sap of our soul which our ancient sages have lived by and died for. To make a sincere confession of it, I doubt my ability to break ground even on that great subject.

I shall now pass on to the other aspect of our religion – our mythologies. If the spiritual aspect is considered to be the sublimest by all the world, our mythical is considered to be the absurdist. Such a jungle of wild thought and fictitious figures as to beat Odinism (*to do with Norse mythology, centring around the god Odin – editors*) itself, hallow, innumerable paradoxes and conflicting views perceptible in these tales. It is not Mr. Swami alone, I confess, but it is the whole Hindu Nation that lives by this mirage as the food for the soul. There is a substance neglected by all. Here is a shadow hankered after by all. A melancholy fact indeed! There are some who contend, that these tales represent allegorically the tenets of our religion. I admit it may be true and I also admit that there might have been times, when the ordinary Hindu found divine inspiration in and through them all. But the modern world stands on the knife edge of rationality and discrimination. The old faith is gone for good or for bad, never more to return. The soul of our Mythology is gone away. It has become a dead thing. The sooner it is cremated the better.

Let us, at this stage, endeavour, to examine in brief, the mischiefs that are wrought by our mythology; the exhalations of the poor putrefying dead thing. Even here I do not think, I need be exhaustive. He who runs may read them, provided he is willing to do so. They fall, to my mind into two distinct classifications. The one I conceive to be mischiefs that are wrought by the "inspiration" we derive from the characters of the stories. The other by the mythologies themselves. Belonging to

the first, I may cite three of the grossest instances: (1) Narada, a God by himself, the son of Brahma, could not live a single day without tale bearing, Good God! How rightly is he fit to be the follower of Milton's fallen Archangel, than the beloved son of the great Brahama! (2) Almost all gods are given to mean spite and hatred, which give rise to internecine feuds. (3) Most of the Gods are polygamists (if one could use the word for those mighty celestial beings.) What is worse, a few of them are given to concubinage and worse still are "brothel hunters." I am not venturing upon any irresponsible statement. There is a celebrated "Utsavam" (*an annual temple festival – editors*) held in the very heart of Madras, I may say, one held under the very nose of Mr. Swami, of Vishnu going to a brothel and poor Amman (*the consort goddess – editors*) chastising her truant lord. Why need I multiply instances? These are the essences of our mythologies. The common Hindu is thus taken in and sanctioned by their divine precedents pauses not to grovel in the sway of immorality and corruption. Of course learned pandits are not wanting, who at the mention of all these, last themselves up into the white heat of eloquence, and with countless legerdemains reveal, what they say the spiritual significance of all these stories (sic). Good God! What could the innocent common man know of all these quillet and quiddits! Such is the state of our mythologies. On the face of them rankly immoral or at best absurd stories; the truth of which, so it is professed, is more difficult to divine than the bare facts of the spiritual side of our religion. Let our fellow men choose the better of these two.

I shall now come to what I consider to be the mischief wrought by the spirit of these mythologies. The Gods are represented in them, with all the human weaknesses. The very natural propensity therefore arises in the common Hindu to purchase off their favour for his material gain. If the Gods are represented as the very emblems of all that is purest, just and truest man dare not make gods his confidant in his moral dereliction nay, would not foster any such at all, for fear there are Gods! But alas! Now there are Gods and Gods, countless perhaps are the forest leaves; yet we have no mentor, no moral guide. How tragical! How many of us have thought of breaking one hundred cocoanuts and burning a maund of camphor as expiation for past crimes or what is worse, for success in future ones. Let anybody who is prone to laugh over this cocoanut-camphor affair, laugh enough, but pray, let it all be grim, wise and serious, indicative of repentance and remorse. Are we not vain men who imagine that prospective penitence can

afford a present violation of duty and that the pure nature of the heavenly powers would admit of compromise and dispensation for sin. Dispensation for Sin, sale of Indulgences is going on in the twentieth century. If not in ink and parchment, surely in camphor and cocoanut. And that with the connivance of our mischievous priests! Indulgences! Everywhere indulgences! Buying off of God's favour. And what are our temples, but the Pulpits where these indulgences are sold. Where are our Luthers? Do they still lie hidden in the womb of future? The sooner the iconoclast comes, the better for honesty and purity in life. Iconoclasm, Sansculottism (*a term from the days of the French revolution, referring to ideas of radical equality invoked chiefly by the very poor – editors*), I am not afraid of these words; much less of the things.

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929

The Volunteers Assemble

The first Self-respect Volunteers Conference was held at Pattukottai on the 25th and 26th instants. We have published elsewhere in this issue a portion of the presidential address delivered at the Conference. The address is teeming with the spirit of revolt which is inherent in every youth of the land. The president has clearly set forth that social revolution is the inevitable precedent of political advancement, and that the self-respect youths must be prepared to sacrifice their lives if necessary for securing equal privileges and justice. We watched with admiration the enthusiastic speeches of the youths and we were not a little struck with wonder especially when the youths boldly stood up showing their readiness for inter-caste and widow marriages. The ready rush of the sturdy youths to support their solution of temple-entry to all castes, showed their ardor in sacrifice their all on behalf of the depressed millions. The volunteers have expressed their willingness to work for those candidates who can extend their support to the Self-respect movement. In short, the conference has set a definite programme of work to be followed by the youths of the Self-respect movement. We only wish the volunteers begin their work in right earnest, and create a stronger public opinion before the elections. We take this opportunity of congratulating the organizers of the Conference and other youths who have keenly participated in bringing the conference to a success.

– *Revolt,* 29 May 1929

The Self-respecters Volunteers Conference, Pattukottai

Reception Address

Mr. P.S. Dhandapani, Chairman of the Reception Committee, in the course of his address, at the First Self-respect Volunteers Conference, said:

The aims and objects of the Self-respect movement are well known to us. The political, social and religious conditions prevailing in our country today are such that are derogatory to our self-respect. We will be only too glad to end them. But we try to put up with them, because they are ancient. Fear is the chain that binds us to this slavery of our times, and we must take heart to do away with them. Fortunately for us, we are

under the yoke of a foreign rule which cannot connive at the Varanashramite reactionaries, as the governments of old did, in putting down the Buddhists and Siddhas when they rose in arms against them.

Some irresponsible hirelings have already begun a campaign of misrepresentation regarding our movement in the name of "theism." Their calculated advocacy for the cause of the temples which even a Gandhi termed as "brothels," is only a device to hoodwink the masses and to help the priest-craft to carry on their cruel exploitation. The temples are responsible for the enormous waste of our national wealth and energy. After all the Varnashramite Brahmin is the wire-puller who sets up the "Sad-Sudras" against our Non-brahmin brethren. This theism is a sort of an epidemic which usually breaks out during election times. It is no wonder therefore, that it is virulent now on the eve of the epoch-making elections to the legislatures. It is a truism that cannot be denied that the Brahmins have all along been successful in keeping us under abject subjection through a strong mobilisation of political power. Unless their attempts are thwarted, and political power wrested from their hands and manipulated by Non-brahmins, the day of our liberation is far far away. Such propaganda of vilification is to be strongly counteracted by organised effort on our part, and by returning to the legislatures such of the Non-Brahmins as support the tenets of the self-respect movement.

I should therefore like to suggest that among the many principles of the Self-respect movement, we place the repudiation of Brahminism, abolition of the caste system, and religious vandalisms as the immediate issues. If we should march on from one accomplishment to another, we should not only practice these principles but we must also take our sisters with us. If the movement should bear fruit, the support and sacrifice of our sisters for the cause is a paramount necessity. This can be only accomplished by educating them on the lines of the self-respect movement.

None of these things is possible without organised effort and disciplined action. The slender resources and ill-disciplined service of volunteers in their individual capacity will not be of great use. It is the duty of our elders and leaders to organise our forces for disciplined action. Their immediate objective should be a strong organised band of volunteers ready to carry the message of self-respect from door to door. I appeal to our leader Mr.E.V. Ramasami to open his institution for training Self-respect workers without any further delay.

Before concluding I wish to point out to the youths that the destinies of our country rest entirely with us. The burning passion for self sacrifice and a strong courage for action should be our guiding principles. I eagerly await the day when we shall usher in the kingdom of happiness by our service and sacrifice.

Resolutions – S.R. Volunteers Conference

The following are among the resolutions passed:

1. The conference decides that our volunteers should carry out in action the resolutions passed in the First Provincial Self-respect Conference held at Chingleput by regular and united propaganda work.
2. Even after our repeated warnings, without any attention or fore-thought, the Brahmins including Mr. Madan Mohan Malaviya and the newspapers like "Hindu" and "Swadesamitran" are using the degrading words like "Sudra," "the people of the 4th caste" and "Panchama." So this conference insists that if they persist in using these words any more, we will without any hesitation use the word Mlechas the equivalent for Brahmins as found in the Tamil Dictionaries.
3. This conference decides to boycott those papers that use the degrading words like "Sudra, Panchama and the people of the 4th caste" and those that advocate the views of the Varanashramadharma.
4. This conference decides that our volunteers among their propaganda work should include the Temperance propaganda also as one of the important factors.
5. This conference decides that our volunteers in their propaganda work in the various parts of our Tamil Nadu should found Physical Training institutions and advocate that each and every youth should have his or her body strong and healthy.
6. As passed in the Chingleput Conference, this conference resolves that the Self-respect Association should be registered and the newspapers 'Dravidan', 'Kudi Arasu', and 'Revolt' should be made to run permanently without any stop under its guidance.

7. This conference welcomes the Act passed by Hon S. Muthiah, the Excise Minister that in the Government appointments all should have equal opportunities and it also requests the other Ministers and the members of the Executive to bring into force the same.

8. This conference congratulates Messrs. Eswaran, Pasupathy and Karuppan who took prominent part in Erode Tempe entry and it requests the people to contribute liberally to support them.

9. This conference enjoins the volunteers to make themselves ready for the Self-respect campaign in connection with the temple entry that is going on now in our country.

10. This conference appeals to the Self-respect volunteers to promote, and contract inter-marriages and prefer widows in such marriages whenever possible.

11. This conference strongly condemns Malaviyaji for his propaganda in favour of the iniquitous systems of caste and Varnashrama, the Vedas, Shastras and the Puranas, and also strongly repudiates his wanton misrepresentations of the self-respect movement.

– *Revolt*, 5 June 1929

The First Self-Respect Volunteers' Conference, Pattukottai

Presidential Address

The following is the full text of the presidential address, delivered by Mr. S. Guruswami, sub-editor. The "Revolt" at the First Self-respect volunteers' Conference, held at Pattukkottai on the 25h and 26th instants:

Sisters and Brothers,

I thank you heartily for conferring upon me the privilege of presiding over the deliberations of this Volunteers' Conference, especially at this critical period of our country's history. The progress of a country lies entirely in the hands of youths, in their fervour, and capacity for sacrifice. Instances of the achievements of youths, where elders have failed are not wanting in our country's history. Youth is a burning passion for progress born out of the sense of a strong disaffection for the existing order of things. It cares not for public opinion but creates one and

shapes it to its own advantage. The duty of us the Self-respect youths is therefore clear. We must be ready for action, to do and die.

Youths of other countries

Political, social and economic revolutions brought about in other countries are due to the untiring efforts of youths of those countries. We will have to hang our heads in shame before the achievements of youths in the countries of Ireland, France, Italy, Germany, Persia, Turkey, China etc. The Russia that was groaning under the tyranny of the Czars, with an appalling ignorance and illiteracy of the masses is now basking under the sunshine of education and progress. While there were only 20 percent of educated people before, there are today, 80 percent of the population literate, and the credit of it all goes to the youths and students organized by the Soviet Government. The China of today liberated from a foreign domination and superstitious customs is the creation of youths, returned with education from countries like America and Japan. Under the able leadership of Sun Yat Sen, the Chinese youths of the South organized themselves and wrought the emancipation of their country. The case of Germany is also one such. The youths of Germany revolted against the tyrannical rule of the Kaiser and the slavish traditions and religious superstitions imposed upon them by society by organizing themselves under a young professor by name Karl Fischer, into an organization called the Free German youth. The achievements of "Young Turkey" is also well known. The once despicable "Sickman of Europe" is today at the pinnacle of glory, because of the Young Turk Movement of Mustapha Kemal Pasha. The Fascist movement of Italy, Sin Fein in Ireland and other movements in Egypt and Afghanistan are the standing monuments of the efforts of youths.

Social revolution must precede Political reforms

We have gathered together at a critical movement of our struggle for freedom. Our country is at its depths of degradation in all aspects – political, economic and social. Our political and economic ailments are symptoms of a disease that are of a recent origin of about 2 centuries. But our social disease is a chronic one which is eating into the vitals of our society and threatening us with perdition. The social disabilities therefore demand our immediate and foremost attention lest we should succumb to it by neglect. A perusal of the history of other countries shows that political and economic regeneration have followed social reformation. I believe therefore the social reform is the most important

factor of which I shall say a few words.

The first Self-respect conference took place only three months back at Chingleput. This Volunteers' Conference, following as it does, upon the heels of that momentous session, is very important. No one can deny that the Chingleput conference is a landmark in the annals of South Indian history. The effects of the conference are too well known to demand enumeration. In short it has blown a new life into the Tamil Nad. It has implanted in us the desire for social liberation, and has awakened in us the knowledge that only through social progress can we attain to perfect freedom.

We cannot but remember with gratitude the yeoman service rendered to us by our revered leader, Mr. E.V. Ramasami with his experience of old age and the enthusiasm of youth. He has sowed in our bosom, the seed of Self respect, the strong longing for social reformation before everything else. The youth world is grateful to him for all his services. If only we could command the enthusiasm, the fervour and faith that animate our leader, if only we had an undaunted courage and adamantine faith in ourselves, we are sure to bring down the whole world under our feet. The spirit of Joan of Arc, the French girl in male attire, who fought against odds of well equipped English army should animate every youth of our country. In such a case, we need not despair of our future.

Freedom and rights are not in the gift of anybody. There is not even a solitary instance of any nation having obtained them as bounties from others. Rights are secured after a strong fight with the usurpers. It is a life and death struggle, a fight to the finish and the struggle for wresting rights from the oppressors is no smooth sailing.

Religion

The greatest of the impediments to the progress of the world is religion. It checkmates our advancement at every stride. Only those that have the courage to throw religion overboard, command progress. To think that progress goes hand in hand with religion is wrong. It is only when stalwarts like Martin Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Wycliffe, John Huss etc., had the audacity to repudiate Christian superstitions in the West that Europe saw the dawn of freedom. It is only since the last 500 years, ever since the time they had the fortitude to oppose religion, that the countries enjoy real freedom.

The test of our courage lies in our capacity to raise a standard of revolt against religion. It has enslaved the people and immersed them in the quagmire of misery. So long as there are people who refuse to believe that religion is a human institution intended for the benefit of man, and as such, it can and should be shaped to suit modern conditions, and as long as they persist in furnishing fresh copies for Miss Mayo, we shall have to end such religion. While we lack the courage to destroy religious superstitions which are revolting to our commonsense and experience and tyrannical social customs which like a canker is eating into the vitals of our society, to talk of opposing an organized government fortified with machine guns and other ammunitions, is but an empty threat. That a country which is a afraid of the sway of the kusha grass, 6 inches long, a country which is a slave to a religion which is ridiculously fabulous, meaningless and without foundation, that it is preparing for a war in favour of Independence is really amusing! The duty of the volunteers of the Self-respect movement that has given us the strength necessary for declaring war against religion must be clear to us. May I draw your attention to what Mr. Nariman said while presiding over the Youth Congress: "Our elders may while away their time in deliberating, debating and passing resolutions and leave them as monuments of their work for the coming generation. The responsibility of bringing them into force lies entirely with us, the youth of the country."

I am not unaware of the many difficulties that shall dog our way when we begin to fight religion in right earnest. The opposition shall be from a near quarter, from our parents, from our own kith and kin. By our courage and unflinching devotion to the cause we must win them over instead of wasting time in futile arguments. Secondly the opposition is to be expected from the Government itself which have an interest in perpetuating present evils and in proving a stumbling block to social progress. The government are not unaware of the fact that with the dawn of social enlightenment a potent desire for political freedom is sure to follow suit and their recent enactment in the Assembly aimed against religious opposition is a pawn on the dice. That the Brahmins who form a microscopic minority of 3 percent in the population and the English men who are fewer still, should suddenly fall in love with Hinduism and evince an interest in safeguarding it, is indeed a problem to conjure with! We should realize therefore that the wrath of the government is sure to be upon us as soon as the fight for our social

rights begins, if not now.

God

The constabulary of God is even greater than that of religion. I for one believe that to discuss whether god exists or not is the height of indolence. Lord Buddha says:

How can it be that Brahma

Would make a world and keep it miserable

Since if all powerful, he leaves it so

He is not good, and if not powerful, He is not God!.

In the name of God are committed acts that one would shrink from otherwise. God serves as a refuge for the unimaginable vagaries and atrocities of hypocrites.

"God and Destiny" are the two words that kill the initiative and strength for action in youths. The sooner we banish the belief of them, the stronger shall we be for it. Granting that there is a God, why worry him with prayers, petitions, and sycophancy? While the youths in other countries such as Russia and France leave no stone unturned in scientific research in bringing the dead back to life, in rejuvenation, that we should be gloating over fables and singing hymns of the improbable miracle of bones becoming a girl imputed to religion is simply ridiculous. With bated breath, with weeping eyes, and with quivering lips you may sing the praises of God and you are as much entitled to liberation or Mukti as a gramophone that is capable of all these!

In this connection I wish to sound a note of warning to my dear sisters and brothers. The Brahmins with all their hue and cry of "Religion in danger" are shrewd enough to provide their children with sound English education. But our elders are quite in the dark and still persist in sending their children to Tevara Patasalas (*centres for learning the Saivite holy hymns – editors*) While the youths of other countries shall be playing airships in about 20 years, shall our youths be wasting time in making researches for determining as to which "bead" is holy and what hymn shall give us Mukti? It is really amusing to find our youths discussing incessantly about the Lost Lamoria (*Tamil enthusiasts held that the mythical lost land of Lamoria was part of a Greater Tamil land– editors*) and determining the extent and limits of Tamilagam, while other nations are discovering lands in the Antarctic. I plead therefore in right earnest for liberal and

rational education of our youths to equip them with the strength to fight the battles of life boldly and save themselves from servile beggary.

Superstitious beliefs and customs

Now it is the paramount duty of us, the youths to break through the many superstitious beliefs, meaningless ceremonials and irrational traditions that parade our society. It is a matter for gratification that even our elders are losing faith in them, but quickening the process of its destruction is necessary for the well being of our society. In this enlightened district, I am sorry to note that there are still 90 percent of youths who are victims to chance matrimony arranged after consulting oracles and fortune tellers. Ill-matched couples are the results of consulting Puranas and pujaris while rational criterion are completely ignored. Yet we persist in this deed of shame. It is for the youths to break these foolish traditions to pieces. It we don't progress with the times, we will be nowhere in the struggle for existence.

Inequities of caste

The caste distinctions are not so very acute amongst us, the youths. Yet, we will have to admit that we young men lack the boldness and initiation in the matter of inter marriages. It is of course true that the illiteracy of our sisters is also responsible for this state of affairs. The remedy therefore rests entirely in educating them. You must bear in mind what Dr. Moonje said in one of his speeches. "It is only through inter-marriage that you can destroy caste." The problem of untouchability is a serious one which cannot be ignored. We need be forewarned of the disastrous consequences that are likely to follow if justice is not meted out to the so called untouchables and if we persist in treating millions of our population, in a cruel manner. In this connection, I wish to emphasise that the temples that are responsible in promoting caste iniquities and the sin of untouchability should either be closed or destroyed. No calamity is to be apprehended on account of closing them as in the case of Erode, where the temple is closed for the past two months. In this direction it is the duty of the youths to do all that we can to destroy the invidious distinctions that are manufactured in the temples.

The liberation of women

The position of women, in our country is highly deplorable. Our religion and puranas are alone responsible for their present plight.

The much advertised Hindu religion with all its symbolism of women for Wealth and Learning, heartily embraces in its fold nearly 18 millions of widows in teens. A religion which is responsible for the woes of so many, for their degradation and servility, and the God that tolerates such a religion and the idols of such a god, all these deserve to be pulverised. Widowhood is more heartrending than even "Suttee"; but the Government's connivance at it explains clearly that they are opposed to our social progress. The policy of non interference in religion and the excuse of opposition are no satisfactory explanations for a Government's apathy that could stop Suttee inspite of tremendous protests. So the duty of affording relief to widows' agonies devolves upon the youth world which alone can supply a lasting solution.

The slavery of women in the name of chastity is one that demands our immediate attention. The chastity that imposes ignorance or servility upon a woman should go. A rational interpretation of chastity should be partnership on equal terms. All the legal disabilities on women should be removed and they must have equal opportunities with their brethren.

The custom of dedication of girls to the temples should be prohibited at once. We should make such efforts that the advocates of this immoral cause take a lesson.

We know poverty is chronic among the masses who form the bulk of the Non Brahmin population and the only immediate relief is Birth control. The need for birth control is an accepted factor and what is wanted now is a vigorous propaganda among the people regarding the different methods of Birth control through the press and the platform.

Now the work before us is that we organise ourselves for disciplined action. We should put up an incessant fight against such beliefs as god, religion, and tradition that do not stand the test of reason and that impede our progress.

Social customs that are like barriers to the brotherhood of man should be put an end to.

Public institutions that are responsible for perpetuating untouchability and other caste iniquities should be destroyed.

A system of education that shall provide us with industrial and rational training should be devised to suit modern conditions. Efforts should

be made to enact laws regarding the enjoyment of rights and privileges so that they may apply to men and women alike. We should educate the masses as to the colossal waste of public money in connection with festivals and should make a sincere attempt at stopping the drain. We should demonstrate our disaffection and antipathy for all those who are traitors to our cause for their statues, pictures. Puranas and literature by any suitable method. For all these constructive work we should rely entirely upon our own resources. To keep alive the Self-respect movement, to make it a vital force in the country, all of us the youths should organize ourselves into a Volunteers organisation prepared to stand by the cause dear to us unto the last.

Conclusion

Before concluding my address, I cannot but refer to my master, Socrates the great philosopher who lived in Greece 2396 years ago. He was charged with having denied the Gods, attempted at reforming the prevalent religion and organised the youths to spread his new mission and was sentenced to death by a fanatical Government. In the advanced age of 69, the hero sacrificed his life at the altar of truth to vindicate his convictions. The blood of that hero who lived for his principles and ended his days for them, should run in our veins so that we might with equal zeal, propagate and stand by our own cause.

- *Revolt*, 29 May and 5 June 1929

The Self-respect League

The Self-respect movement ever since its inauguration by us a few years back has made rapid strides among the masses and has created a good deal of stir in our province. Thanks to the orthodox section on the one hand and the unthinking self depreciating followers of orthodoxy on the other, the movement had its constitution finally fixed on that memorable day of the 18th February of the year of grace at Chingleput. The Self-respect league was given a final shape, with a General Committee of enthusiastic members.

After the Chingleput Conferences, (which by the by, evoked a volley of questions from the interested few at the legislative council) the movement took a stronger and more impressive hold of the younger generation, which resulted in the Conference of the Self-respect youths at Pattukkottai. As one aware of the results of all the 'one man's movements', we thought it wise to shift the burden from our tired

shoulders to a committee, whose members have given ample testimony to their selfless work and capacity for sacrifice. We are also prepared to hand over the journals that are under our direct management, to the Self-respect league, when we are convinced of its financial and other equipments.

With a view to give a permanence to the League, in all its aspects, we have determined to enroll members to the League. The object of the League as embodied in the constitution is 'social reconstruction so as to secure liberty, equality and justice for the individual'. All those who are eligible under section 2 of the constitution (published on page 100 of *The Revolt)* are entitled to become members of the League.

Those who are desirous of becoming members are requested to send the application form, printed in the last page of this issue or a copy of it, with the annual subscription of annas Two. We expect *everyone* who is after social reconstruction, especially everyone of the youth world to take to the task in right earnest and fulfil the desire of a movement which aims at bringing together the multitudinous sections of humanity.

- *Revolt*, 7 July 1929

***Notes to* 2.2**

1. This was Periyar's Presidential address at the South Indian Social reformers' Conference held on 26.11.1928 at Madras.
2. The reference here is to the Swarajist Congressman (see p. 22) who expressed great dismay at the conferences passed at the First Self-respect Conference held in Chinglepet in 1929.
3. This is probably a reference to a Saivite Conference held in Tirunelveli (see Part 2, Section 5: Tamil Saivism and Self Respect)

2.3 Self-respect and Socialism

Book Review

Bolshevism and the West, by Bertrand Russell and Scott Nearing, published by George. Allen and Unwin, price 2sh.

This is an account of a debate between two of the leading thinkers of the world on the subject "Is the Soviet form of government applicable to Western civilization?" Mr. Scott Nearing presents the affirmative of the proposition in three stages. Firstly, he maintains that the form of any government corresponds with the stage in social development attained by the people concerned. For instance, under the agricultural civilization of the feudal ages when one part of the population owned the land and another part worked upon the land, that part of the population which owned the land ran the political Government. With the development of commerce and industry and the exploitation of the coal and iron, the oil and timber, the old division of society based on ownership of land gave way to the new division of capitalist and labourer and the modern bourgeoise state is formed which is run entirely in the interest of the business magnates. When the capitalist state breaks, as it is bound to sometime or other, socialism is bound to follow and the Russian Soviet is a transition stage bridging capitalism and socialism.

The second stage in Mr. Nearing's argument is a description of the Soviet form of Government. Bolshevism is dictatorship under the control of the industrial workers but dominated by the communist party. Three outstanding characteristics of the Soviet system should be noted. Firstly electoral constituencies are not territorial. They are economic or occupational. The Nehru committee and their supporters will do well to digest the fact that modern Russia considers "joint electorates" as an anachronism and a survival of medieval feudalism. Representatives to the Soviet are elected by "Separate electorates". The second feature of the Soviet system is the organization of the economic life of the people, altogether eliminating private profiteering in industry. The third characteristic of the Soviet is contained in the motto: "No work. No vote." The political rights of the country are restricted to those who perform productive and useful service.

The third stage in Mr. Nearing's argument is his contention that the

Soviet system is bound to overtake every part of the world at some time or other. International war, class war, civil war and hard times are destroying Western civilization. When capitalism breaks, as it must sooner or later, there will be the dictatorship of a group of industrial workers functioning under a sternly disciplined party like the communist party in Russia.

Mr. Bertrand Russell then delivers his negative presentation address. He begins by drawing an analogy between the Soviet system and the form of government established in England by Cromwell in the seventeenth century: government by a party, not elected by the people but chosen for opinions held, in a country with a feudal system of land tenure, with an illiterate population and with a rising middle class. The conditions of seventeenth century England were the same as those obtaining in the Russia of 1921 and produced the Cromwell form of government in modern Russia. But England has advanced since Cromwell's days. So have the other Nations of the West which have assimilated the technique of present day industrialism. Hence when the capitalist government breaks, and Mr. Russell agrees with Mr. Nearing that it may break, it is not the Soviet form but some other that will step in.

Next, Mr. Russell controverts Mr. Nearing's contention that economic cause alone determines the form of a society. Religious, ethnic and cultural conditions also count for a great deal. Comparing the civilizations of Russia and China, Mr. Russell finds that identical economic conditions are capable of producing the most profound difference in the organizations of Society. The Russians are religious, persecuting, centralized, the Chinese are free thinking, decentralized and unpersecuting. The difference in civilisation is due to difference in tradition and temperament. The Russian tradition is still the tradition of seventeenth century Europe. But the Western countries have since experienced the scepticism of the eighteenth century and the optimism of the nineteenth century. These experiences have altered the outlook of the West which will no longer tolerate the imposition of the primitive Soviet from of government.

The Marxian idea of the economic determination of history is far too simple to hold good of the vast complexity of human affairs. It did not hold good even in the case of Russia where they had the revolution which they wanted. Instead of introducing Communism with its benefits

they brought about a government extraordinarily like the old government of the Czar, centralized, depending upon secret police, secret arrests, imprisonments and executions without trial, concerned to prevent insurrections and assassinations, and opposed by the bulk of the population. Russia had therefore to drop her ambitious project and go back to the New Economic Policy involving only parts of Socialism accepted by the most moderate socialists.

Mr. Russell attributes to the Bolsheviks one great discovery, and that is how to take the next step in countries with a large illiterate and apathetic population and a small group of intellectuals. As the next step from autocracy or from any ancient evil in a country of that sort, as a transition in a uneducated country, the Bolsheviks have found the best way. But in a country where the people are accustomed to participate in politics it is an impossible method. Employment of the Russian method by a Western country would result, as it did in Italy, in the dictatorship of the aristocracy. A terrible cataclysm in a lightly organized industrial country will bring about a return to barbarism and will not usher in communism. It is easy to destroy what we have. But it is difficult to make sure that such destruction will be succeeded by what we want. The days for the spectacular are past. We must undertake solid work and build up bit by bit.

Mr. Nearing replies to Mr. Russell and quotes Mr. Ramsay MacDonald who said that if England underwent a revolution "a committee of public safety might well step into Whitehall and make up its mind to impose a new order upon an old chaos". Mr. Nearing challenges Mr. Russell to suggest an alternative scheme which may be employed during the crises of a breakdown of the existing order which is bound to happen at some time or other.

Mr. Russell in winding up the debate denies that he ever said that the present civilization is bound to break down. It is the duty of the western nations to prevent the occurrence of a cataclysm that would destroy industrial plants, power stations and other features of a technically organized society. The populations of the western world ought to be persuaded during times of peace and prosperity that the existing economic system is bad and that methods of socialism should be adopted. It is a slow task. But there is no short and quick road to the millennium. Sudden revolutions merely change the name of things. They cannot change the habits of people and the old things come

back with the new names. Real and enduring change has to be brought about by peaceful propaganda in stages of gradual evolution.

A perusal of this book furnishes food for thought on the part of every intelligent Indian. There is no difference as to the nature of the ultimate ideal between the two participants in the debate. Both are socialists. Mr. Nearing advocates violence as a temporary stage, as a means. But Mr. Russell is a stern believer in nonviolence, a Gandhiite. These two are familiar types in our country. But there is one disconcerting fact about which both these thinkers agree. They both recommend the Soviet system for an agricultural and rural civilization like that of India. Nonviolence is necessary only for the technically organized peoples. The charka is the harbinger of a militarist dictatorship. This conclusion may startle the Saint of Sabarmati but may afford some consolation to those wordy warriors who are declaring Independence at Calcutta

- *Revolt*, 2 January 1929

Soviet Regime

A message dated 4th January, from Bombay says:-

Speaking at a public meeting on the 3rd instant, Mr. M. J. Ryan of Sydney, who is visiting India to study labour conditions in India, gave an eye-witness's account of Soviet Russia. Confining his observations to large towns, Mr. Rayan declared he thought they were not yet a paradise for workers, Russia was far better, compared with other countries. There were still a lot of difficulties for Russian workmen, such as the army of unemployed; with this difference, however, that while everyone realized that the bulk of the unemployed in England would never get a job under capitalists, unemployment in Russia was temporary. Russia, on the whole, had made wonderful progress, despite virtual international ostracism. He had no doubt preparations were being made for an attack on her by the other Powers, who he prophesied, would get the shock of their lives from the Red Army. When such an attack was made, it was up to workers in other countries to be allies with their brother-workers in Russia.

Tales Repudiated

Describing Russian conditions, Mr. Ryan repudiated as untrue stories of half-starved, ill clad people slinking about in perpetual fear of police, who were ever ready to pounce on them. That description, he thought would apply better to Bombay or Calcutta than Moscow or any other Soviet city. The Police in Russia were dressed as ordinary workers, mingled freely with them, called them comrades, and arrested them only on the extremist provocation, but a private trader was not treated with anything like such consideration.

One amusing form of propaganda on behalf of the workers, he noticed was shooting galleries wherein targets were provided by images of prominent imperialists, of whom he particularly noted Sir Austen Chamberlain.

- *Revolt*, 9 January 1929

Retrogressive Internationalism

(By Mr. G. E. S. of U.S.A.)

The Hearst Newspaper syndicate being unable to involve the United States of America and Mexico in war is stressing British resentment at America's successful invasion into world commerce. Americans should realize that England is the Chief loser from the World War besides being game enough not to repudiate its indebtedness to this country. Conditions previous to the World War and the after effects prevent a solution of a serious siege of unemployment of long duration. Past methods of building its world wide trade depended mainly on an arbitrary attitude toward weaker nations, even to preventing the raising and manufacturing of products that would compete with goods from Great Britain. All European nations have exploited the natives of Asia and Africa in a similar manner leaving them barren of profit in contact with Christain nations. Nature has blessed bees with better sense than that. The contrast between the Phillipine Islands and India is also an irritant to economic ills from exploitation and not competition. America's attitude toward China does not aim to make a drug friend of Asia but it speeds the day of a great economic upheaval in the world.

If extremes meet there is much in common between India and United States of America, except that in India the sacred cow is milked thoroughly by the practical Briton but not the "Bull" and Bear venerated by the white collar faddists of the cult of synthetic efficiency. India and Afghanistan because of their excess in population, social and economic errors and disease being promoted by religious beliefs are probably the source of world wide epidemics. America may become an economic pest to other nations and ultimately destroy its world markets by creating a serious unemployment problem. If the Yankee wants to commit economic suicide the act should not threaten in advance the existence of other nations. India and America seek a *Nirvana* that tends to decadence and anarchy under a smoke screen of their respective nomenclatures and system for one process methods and mass propositions. The Priestly efficiency experts use caste divisions, substitute reincarnation for rotation as a reward of merit for repetition of the error in choice of parents, ignoring a fundamental principle that each generation should require its people to be rational, versatile, talented citizens to perpetuate democratic forms of government and not myths that create parasitical elements among mankind.

The Orient confers a halo on that which develops a latent talent by stunting normal facilities; hence occultism is a destructive process of specialization that cannot deceive a camera, although it fascinates by its abnormal blind spots as do freaks and monstrosities. Outwardly it has its parallel in children warped and disfigured by beggar padrones. America is in its era of synthetic efficiency starting from wooden nutmegs and retrograding to wooden heads, a counter motion and inverse ratio that deceives and charms by the misuse of the blessing of Science, in learning to do but one simple task well and creating a nation of industrial and professional morons besides making existence more favourable for semi-wits under a hierarchy that has closed shop to general experience for college graduates. Science and invention used as a scaffold to correct humanity's imperfections can create a race that can outdo the stunted oriental mystics that term machinery black magic and the work of devils. Machinery like psychology can be used to good or bad ends but nature and the Law of compensation reward according to the choice made.

Some perverse streak persists to capitalise herd instincts and prejudices besides refining sabotage into respected professions Ecclesiastical laws termed Blue laws do not comprehend the mission and purpose of Law. Its advocates use it as a magic wand and then again as a camouflage in terming as blasphemy that which may be rant, ridicule or else criticism of superstition and hypocrisy shielded by Caesar. It diverts from the blasphemy that asserts divine guidance an aid in violating human rights, and aspirations for "peace on earth and good will to all men". One day in 365 is set aside to understand some thing that requires thought. The herd would rather fight than reason out a remedy for social and economic ills. Dr. Mar's remedy of bleeding the patient proves the patient is infantile in thought, hence incapable to rightly use the blessing of science. That the majority are ruled by propaganda and misleading slogans proves the thoroughness of their training by a parasitical element experienced in sabotage and exploitation. This element does not educate, it trains to accept by the world, a definition for patriotism that, which in its true relation, blasphemes human progress and the divine spark in humanity it seeks to extinguish.

Europe does not need to go to war with America as a remedy for its social and economic ills. Germany as a republic could have avoided the destructive war caused by an enforced abnormal reverential respect for a class moronised by inter-breeding. Capitalism is blinded by an

overvaluation of divine and property rights as well as by a mistaken or false conception of efficiency. *War is not a remedy* for lack of rational thought and progress. European nations can establish a co-operative common-wealth and be concerned over capitalistic America being stewed in its own juice by its synthetic chiefs. America at present is diverted from its increasing economic and social ills by the issues arising from the eighteenth amendment to its basic law. When it is not that, it is base ball or some shadow chasing or boxing stunt that ignores the cause. United States of America will be unable to meet its own problems, so will Europe if they would rather fight than use common sense. If United States of America would gain the world it will lose in the end. So will any other nation by approved methods of capitalism, because of the blind spot of moral atrophy from a lopsided sales of psychology and incentive.

- *Revolt*, 1 May 1929

Jatin Das Dead

It is not every one who has the courage to sacrifice his life at the altar of a cherished cause or principle. It may be that life's full of woes, troubles and tribulations but yet there are not many who, for that reason would wish that it were not protracted. This being the outstanding characteristic of human nature there is reason for all the more admiration when we come across one who treats his very life as of no value whatever by the side of his convictions and flings it away for the sake of an idea or ideal. History speaks in accents of utmost reverence and respect of such high spirited souls who have performed the great sacrifice. We have no doubt but that the same honour and respect will be paid to the heroic soul which passed away in the Lahore Jail on Friday last. Jatin Das subjected himself to the inconceivable agony of absolute starvation for over sixty days and eventually succumbed to the exhaustions born thereof. He fought for a cause which he valued more highly than life and even those amongst us who do not approve of the righteousness of that cause - and their number must be few indeed will not – we are sure have the unchivalrous petty mindedness to withhold from him the tribute usually accorded to all deeds of staggering heroism and self-sacrifice. In the death of Mr. Jatin Das there is promise of life not only for the political prisoners of the country but for the nation itself. And we are not sure that the bureaucracy has not added one more undying blot to its none too clean history by precipitating this tragedy. Jatin Das is dead but his shining heroism and sacrifice lives, and that is an asset ever to be proud of.

- *Revolt*, 15 September 1929

An Appeal for Convicted S.I.R. Labour Leaders

The South Indian Railway Labour Union, with branches all over the line, was championing the cause of the Railway Labourers. The S. I. Railway, who heard the grievances, received the deputations, and gave interviews to the representatives of the Union and in fact both the Union and the authorities were cordial in their relationship. During 1928, there was a proposal to retrench 3171 labourers in the workshops and the Union raised a strong protest about the same and tried its best to bring an amicable settlement; but at last strike was declared on 20-7-28 which resulted in the arrest of leaders of the S.I.R. Labour Union who were convicted for ten years by the Sessions Judge of Trichinopoly

on a charge of conspiracy under section 120 B of the Indian Penal Code to commit offences under section 126 and 128 of the Ry. Act. An appeal has been filed in the High Court of Madras and the leaders were let on bail. It is expected that the case will be taken up in the course of the next month.

The Union had sufficient funds, which was utilized during the strike, for organizing the strike, for supporting the families of the strikers, for defending the cases against the workers and also the conspiracy case launched against the leaders, which continued day to day for nearly 9 months and so the finances of the Union have become slender and the Union authorities are compelled to make this appeal so that, with the contributions, they could be able to fight out the case in the High Court. The appeal in the High Court will cost nearly Rs. 10,000.

The leaders, who were convicted, were all innocent and most of them were Railway servants. The families of the leaders will have to suffer if they were convicted and it is the duty of each and every individual to rise to the occasion.

This appeal is issued expecting a good response and it is requested that each and every individual and societies will help their mite to the cause of the under-mentioned (whose names are omitted here) 15 leaders, who sacrificed their career for the cause of the labourers.

Remittances may be sent direct to Mr.V.P. K. Kayaroganam Pillai, Banker, Negapatam, South India.

T. Govindasamy Chettiar,
President, Defence Committee.

- *Revolt*, 3rd November 1929

3 POLITICAL NON-BRAHMINISM AND THE JUSTICE PARTY

3.1 The Non-brahmin as Citizen

Reform

(By S. Uthanda Nadar)

Social reform is one of the pressing topics of modern times that engage the serious attention of bonafide well wishers of Indian Nation. There were days, when a sincere social reformer, anxious to see a better order of things prevail in society, was beset with violent opposition of vested interests, as well as innate conservatism of people. But now, it is rejoicing, that happy signs of growing tendency on the part of masses, towards eradicating pernicious evils and flagrant abuses of society, are visible in many quarters. It has become accepted on all hands, that in the absence of social reorganization, India cannot advance an inch further in her march towards National Emancipation.

Of late, Turkey and Afghanistan have shown an inspiring example to the world. Their social spheres have undergone much revolution. Age-long and accredited system of "purdah" has been boldly overthrown. Women population of the countries, who had been hitherto caged like wild birds, and whose activities had been cribbed, cabined and confined within the narrow corridors of domestic circles have been given wider scope of activities and freedom of movement. As a result the twin Muslim Nations loom large in international politics and have procured for themselves an undying fame. And we are sure that India will learn much wisdom from her sister nations.

Side by side, thanks to the invigorating activities of Non Brahmin movement, revolting conscience of modern generation has rightly grasped the imperative need for and immediate change in Indian society. Congress and conferences are held to turn the question of social reform into practical politics, from academic discussion in which state it had been hitherto detained. India is tired of innumerable crude superstitions and unreasonable dogmas. Her children can no more follow any theory blindly and bluntly, unless completely convinced of

underlying truths by a regular analytical scientific process. Hence, as Lord Alfred Tennyson said, old order must change yielding place to new. Indian society must be purged of all pernicious evils that keep the masses under perpetual social slavedom and political thralldom. A healthy Indian Nation must be built at all costs.

But, we are aware that undertakers of this thankless task will have to encounter fire and brimstone from orthodox section, ridicules from conservatives, and scurrilous wordy attacks from insane reactionaries. They will be fallen foul of, and denounced as an enemy of religion and opponent of sacred customs and religious traditions. However, heedless of any amount of mudslinging from mischievous sources, true well wishers of India must pull on with their humble service in the social field of the country.

- *Revolt*, 26 December 1928

The Non Brahmin

(By Satyasadhu)

The Non-brahmin represents a section of humanity characterized by its extreme truthfulness, sincerity and humility. Any section of human beings desiring seclusion as a mark of its sanctity will eventually feel its sanctity degenerating into stagnation. Not by proud segregation but by close intimacy, not by austere superiority but by humble understanding, not by cynical patronizing but by sympathetic upliftment, not by arrogant self-sufficiency but by all embracing catholicity is the progress of humanity maintained. Of all forces in human life that go to the making of dominant desire none is more powerful than love. So the compelling motives of the world's devotees from mothers to martyrs have been unselfish. Are the present peacemakers of communal conflicts able, like Gordon in the Soudan, to say, "I declare, if I could stop this slave traffic I would willingly be shot this night" or with John Knox, "God give me Scotland, or I die"? The Non Brahmin should have the courage to declare. "Give me communal harmony, I will forget my community."

No man is the whole of himself; his friends are the rest of him. The solution for communal rancour is to give the aggrieved party time, opportunity and blessing to work out its salvation. The many mistakes, rash steps, or even unjust actions are inevitable in the turmoil incident

to the establishment of a new order of social relationships. To elevate a nation or an individual it is necessary to inculcate self-respect in them. The prevalence of the inferiority complex, the practice of hopeless mendicancy, the adoption of the shameless hobby of enjoying oneself, the cultivation of the self-devouring fastidiousness creates narrowness in those very people who boast of their breadth of outlook. The party that claims vision should not be self-mutilating in its wanton attacks on individuals for their not falling into line with their programme but that sort of "Independence" which they offer to the country, they should see, is not denied to individuals.

After all human activity – political, social, religious or economic – is to be judged by the results achieved and not by the energy spent in the achieving. The ultimate end being the same, the interim methods should not so dishearten true workers as to embitter social relationships. As Mr. G.K. Chesterton has aptly said, "If I were a preacher my sermon will be against the sin of Pride." He says "The more I see of existence, and especially of modern practical and experimental existence, the more I am convinced of the reality of the old religious thesis that all evils began with some attempt at superiority some moment when as we might say the very skies were cracked across like a mirror, because there was a sneer in heaven." It would be frustrating the full joy and completion of the cosmos if we dislocate the design and make any particular individual or society the supreme object of worship. Hence all attempts at alleviating the miseries of existence ought to be blessed and nothing is so much needed now as mutual understanding, recognizing the self-respect of humanity, its ends and how each individual is to subordinate his pride and vanity to the realization of a unified, contented and self assertive society.

He is a Non-brahmin, who has eschewed what he considers condemnatory in the much maligned Brahmin, who is not repeating the disgusting story of the actions, policies, and the monopoly instinct of that section of society which suffers from the superiority complex. The Non-Brahmin has a broader aim. His catholic heart and his correct vision struggle to achieve at a greater humanity. He suffers vicariously in alleviating the sufferings of the masses. He does not care to create comfortable berths for individuals. He works for social peace and individual contentment.

– *Revolt*, 13 February 1929

Where we Are

(By S. Guruswami)

It is only in recent years that the non Brahmin community has come to realize its degraded position in Hindu society. Even thousands of years ago, many great men of the community directed the attention of the Non-Brahmins to their servile conditions under the aliens. But their warning was only a cry in the wilderness. Because the Non-Brahmins were carefully denied all chances of education. the incomers so cleverly manipulated the society among the Non Brahmins that in course of time the latter were made to feel the indispensableness of the former. Even against such heavy odds, many great men sprang from the community, but circumstances prevented them from expressing their opinions boldly. The first and the foremost of the curse that were handed down by the incomers, was the caste-system. It divided the homogeneous community into a number of small divisions. The institution was then made part and parcel of religion. The disease went into the very vitals. Men like Capillar, Tiruvalluvar and 18 Chithars (*Tamil mystics and poets – editors*) more than 2000 years ago, condemned the ruinous system in unequivocal terms. They proved by sane arguments the preposterousness of man's superiority by birth. They showed to the people the absurdity of meaningless ceremonials as Sraddahas and other rites; but met with no encouragement.

Years rolled on and the caste system wrought all that was expected of it by the originators. Men of the same community were flying at one another's throats. Privilege of birth demanded an outer agency to support it and the Aryan element supplied all that was necessary. The country came to be ruled by many alien races. Still there were the intruders at the helm of affairs, and they had no other weapons except god and religion. The Vedas and other puranas were written in order to establish an unquestioning right over the natives. If reason interfered with them, they safely took refuge under the 'All powerful'. Under penalty of hell-fire and eternal damnation, Hinduism (Brahmanism) was safeguarded. Kings may come and kings may go, but the Varnashrama was going on for ever. Whether it was the rule of the Greeks, or the Persians or the Mauryas or the Guptas or the Rajputs or the Moguls or the Mahrattas, it was immaterial to the *Rishi* Community. Their armour was caste system and their weapons, god and religion. If anybody dared to think, woe unto him – nay even to his soul! And

then came the Western invasion. There was a rapid spread of education. The Aryan element eyed it with displeasure. Here was the beginning of their end. Sanctity of languages was tampered with by the "heathen". The rishi community blinked wide and breathed high. Years passed on and the ''holy'' Vedas were translated by the heathen. The face-born thought of its power for curse. Each member of the class eagerly looked up to his right hand to conjure up his hereditary fire. And lo! It was gone! The Vedic hymns were chanted even more vigorously and vociferously and *yagams* were performed in every corner. All that was possible for driving the Europeans was tried by the priestly class, but in vain. The English machine-guns, steamers ands aero-planes proved stronger than the six inches kusha grass (dharpa). The Indian Penal Code proved mightier than the Vedas, Smirithis and Puranas. By and by the Hindu gods themselves began to groan under the feet of the so called mlecchas. Not merely that. The Hindu goddesses like Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) and Saraswathi (goddess of learning) emigrated to the West ("a heathen land") once and forever. Finding their attempts were in vain, the incomers joined the invaders in sucking the blood of the people. It is why whenever the government pretends any reform for the amelioration of the people, the face-born community obstruct it by such outbursts as "religion in danger", and "god in danger". And some of the Non-Brahmins also join the chorus without realizing the real situation. This is the pass we have come into.

- *Revolt*, 10 April 1929

Latest Social Developments

(Mr. A. Ramasami Mudaliar's Lecture)

We extract the following from the presidential address of Mr. A. Ramasami Mudaliar at the first anniversary of the Dr. T. M. Nair Literary Association, which was celebrated on the 15th April at the Gokhale Hall:

The Subject, Mr. Mudaliar began, on which he had intended to speak was, "The Latest Social Developments". The present age, he said, was one when vast social developments were quite the order of the day. All over the world the existing social systems were being rebuilt. In Turkey old social systems were being ruthlessly set aside, and the country and its people were adjusting themselves to the new conditions brought about by the genius of that great Dictator, Mustapha Kamal Pasha. What had happened in Turkey was happening, and was bound to happen in India also, despite all that could be said by obscurantists who took their stand on the immutable customs and traditions of the past. During the past 20 years, incessant change, active and uninterrupted, had been the feature of the social life of this country. That man ought to be made happier than he is, that great democratic ideal, which was so incessantly preached in the political world should also be translated into the social world, that equality of men and women should be recognized and the fairness of dealing towards each other ought to be the attribute of the social system – these were the ideals with which these social changes had been worked out.

An obsolete system

Time was 35 or 40 years ago when mysteries and mysteriousness were the order of the day, when the Hindu often got himself converted into other religions, when even the educated, had with great difficulty to be brought to a sense of the greatness of his own religion and the purity of his own soul. But that time had passed. People were now firm in their belief in the greatness of their religion, and the strength and future of their society, provided it was welded and organized into a whole. Men who had swept away from their lives every tenet of Varanashrama Dharma, who did not know their own religion, who had not studied their own social customs, who had some vague idea that somewhere in the Code of Manu some talk there was that this caste was superior and that caste was inferior, men who made a religious

fetish of every little thing – these were not the men who were going to strengthen the Hindu religion and their social system.

That a system which had done immense injury should be replaced by a system more human, more touching, having a better faith in each other, and in those who composed society, would be the desire of everyone who wanted to see progress. Those orthodox gentlemen who were trying to prevent the logical development of Hindu society by threats to electioneering prospects, by cajolery and by all sorts of tricks – the sooner they realized the fact that every reasoned and reasoning individual whatever his caste might be, was up in arms against a state of society which permitted degradation of individuals merely because of birth, the better it would be for them.

The lecturer next referred to the position of women in Hindu society which was not all that was desirable. And he was doubtful whether women got that treatment which they were entitled to. Nowadays people enthused over the feminine characteristics of Hindu mythology. But the present day treatment of women was at so much variance with its ideals and the conception expounded in the puranas. Socially they had no place and from a financial point of view, they were nowhere. The boy was entitled to a share in the father's property; but the daughter, even if she was the sole surviving heir and her father a millionaire, got nothing but a small share of that property. The result was that every social principle and dogma being based on religion, religion suffered.

Therefore, social reformers could not be blamed if they attacked religion in their over-anxiety to reform society. If people could not realize the great evil they were creating in the country by intermixing religion in social matters, if they had not got the grim determination like Mustapha Kemal Pasha in Turkey to separate the spiritual from the secular matters, then they could not be said to be true representatives of the Hindu religion which they professed to be.

Turning back to the subject of the treatment of women in Hindu society, the speaker drew attention to the narrow groove of moral and ethical principles in which women were made to move.

Child marriages were encouraged, resulting in child windows who were compelled to live the rest of their life in austere devotion to a husband whom, perhaps, they had never seen. Whereas in the case of the death of his wife, he ought to speak of the possibility of a second wife – otherwise, it was considered inauspicious. Taking the case of a

widow, it did not matter how near and dear she was, but once she became a widow, she was an inauspicious being for ever. A society which tolerated such ideas required thorough reform. Society could never improve unless these ideas were blotted out of men's minds altogether.

Temple entry

Regarding the question of temple entry, Mr. Mudaliar declared that it was going to become the very biggest problem for the Hindu Society in the very near future. The movement for the addition of all classes in the great temples of the land was bound to succeed sooner than later. Prohibition of entry into certain temples to classes of people was an illogical state of society which could not be tolerated. Then again a great deal had been said about Atheism and those who were tending to be atheistic in society. But it had to be realized that atheism was a well recognized thing in Hinduism. How dare people say that one man was a true Hindu and the other was an Atheist, while Hinduism itself was the most tolerant of all religions and held in its bosom the Atheists, the Agnostics, the Dwaitins, the Adwaitins, etc. For his own part the speaker was firm in his belief that every Hindu did at heart believe in a supreme God. When the Self respect propagandists condemned the existing temples their main idea was to put an end to the corruption existing in those temples. Mahatma Gandhi himself had once said: "The temples in this country are the den of prostitutes". The fact was that those who made such criticisms of the temples were despondent of any sort of purification and reform being possible with reference to those temples, that they had come out with such extreme statements.

- *Revolt*, 24 April 1929

Present Social Discontent

Under the auspice of the George Town Non-Brahmin Social Club, Mr. K.V. Gopalasami, B.A., (Oxon) delivered the inaugural address of the Literary Branch of the Association, under the presidency of Mr. C. Subbaroya Mudaliar.

Mr. Gopalaswami in the course of his lecture said that discontent is of different kinds, moral, religious social, economic and political. Undoubtedly, in every country the political discontent is making a large noise and moral discontent the least. India is morally discontent

and it is the basis of social and political discontent. The actual discontent involves four crucial problems, the question of marriage, the question of prostitution, the question of family and the question of untouchability. We should give our women education and let them rebel. If they rebel then there will be a better society.

The second fundamental question is the sex problem. Sex is one of the potential elements in life. Birth control and sexual relations ought to be taught to young men. Prostitution is the despicable evil in the whole world. It is a heart rending spectacle to see prostitutes sold like cattle in Bombay. Then to the Purdah. Did it ever strike us, the absurdity of the system of purdah? Have we ever imagined about the insult we give our women, suspecting them to be susceptible to the charms of young men? It is an insult to our women that we should not let her go. It matters little whether the marriageable age is fixed at 13 or 14 unless we fix it fairly as high as 17. We have to educate our people and convert them to our view. Our educated girls have to face problems. It is all a bunkum to exhort women to practice celibacy. Whether a rising nation or not, young men are bound to come into conflict with their parents. Wives loom larger in our eyes than our parents, for we are responsible for their lives.

Thanks to the Brahminocracy, we have a society where kicks are got, the man who gets those kicks, kicks another below, but he does not believe that he is kicked. We should not, in these matters, depend on others to lead us for everybody ought to fight his own battles. Whoever may preach today the best that he can do is to present the case, we should cultivate the thinking capacity. Better we make a mess and suffer for ourselves than suffer in the mess of others. Adi-Dravidas are not allowed to walk on public roads and make use of public wells and temples. It is the Brahmin Civilisation that is responsible for the deplorable position of our Adi-Dravida brethren and women. The lecturer concluded by observing that woman is in the same position as a Panchama and she is denied equal rights and privileges, which man enjoys.

- *Revolt*, 7 July 1929

To the Non-Brahmin Youths

Mr.M.K.Reddi while hoisting the flag at the Vellore Non-Brahmin Youth Conference said:

Dear Comrades,

Remember, ours is a cult of *Action*, and not of idle talk. *Revolution*, thorough-paced and to the very utterance, and not a whit short of it, is our motto. Superstition in all its manifestations is the many headed Hydra that confronts us. To fight it bravely, and to come out victorious is the be-all of our existence. Break away therefore from the moribund past, and unburden the dead-weight of spirit-enslaving customs that hang about your necks.

Heed your leader's words of caution. Be true to them as truly steel and stand by them through war and peace. Be bold and falter not, be brave and flinch not, for none but the brave deserves to breathe the air. Think, every one of you, that you are a knight-errant engaged in your maiden fight and with a definite purpose running through your life. Set before yourselves the highest of ideals and cherish them. Cultivate the noblest of your sentiment and perfect them. Awake from your slumber and realise that you owe your country a duty of service. The service which you are called upon to render in the cause of your motherland is the protection of the work and the uplift of the oppressed and downtrodden.

Stretch your arms across the frontiers and beyond the seas and make a common cause with the youths of other lands. *Self-respect* is your cherished hermitage; and *Revolt* against deadening customs is your watch word. Maintain your place in the vanguard of progress, but fail not to lead gently on your weaker comrades. Bear the banner aloft and press forward with unswerving tread and untiring nerves; and the cry of victory will redound from end to end even as the flag now unfurled shall flout the sky.

- *Revolt*, 16 January 1929

Madura Non Brahmin Youth Conference Resolutions.

The following are among the resolutions passed at the Madura-Ramand District Second Non-Brahmin Youth Conference held at Madura under the presidency of Mr. N. Sivaraj B.A.,B.L M.L.C., on 25th and 26th August29:-

1) This conference resolves that an association, like the Servants of

India Society may be started for working for the upliftment of the Non-brahmin community.

2) This Conference requests the Government, Local Self Government officials and the Managers of private schools not to prescribe for studies in the schools under their managements, books inculcating ideas of inferiority and superiority and of antiquated customs and manners and requests the Non-brahmin authors not to write such books.

3) This Conference requests the Government to appoint a Committee to delete lessons referred to above from books approved by the Text Books Committee.

4) This Conference approves of the recommendations made by the Age of Consent Committee with regard to the Age of Consent and marriageable ages.

5) This Conference requests the members of the Legislative Assembly to wholeheartedly support this measure and pass it into law.

6) This Conference requests that even during ordinary conversations words indicating inferiority or superiority as of master and servant should not be used and specially requests the youths to cultivate this habit from the beginning.

7) This Conference is of opinion that in all choultries, Hospitals and public places under the management of the Government and in Refreshment Rooms under the management of the railways no distinction of caste should be made and requests that the existing distinctions should be abolished.

8) This Conference is of opinion that Brahmin teachers are mainly responsible for the backwardness of the Non-brahmin boys in their educational matters and requests that Non-brahmin teachers must be appointed in all the schools, especially as Headmasters, under the management of the Municipalities and Local Board Institutions.

9) This Conference requests that no license should be issued to hotels which observe caste distinctions and requests the Government to make necessary amendments in law to carry out the above object.

10) This Conference requests that in Civil Procedure Code and Registration Act nobody should be compelled to "write" their caste and religion.

11) This Conference adopts the resolution passed at the First Self-respect Provincial Conference held at Chingleput.

- *Revolt*, 1 September 1929

The Second Non Brahmin Youth Conference

Presidential Address

The following is an extract of the presidential address delivered by Mr. N. Sivaraj, B.A.,B.L., M.L.C., at the (Madura-Ramnad) 2nd Non-Brahmin Youth Conference held at Madura on the 25th and 26th August:-

By electing me President of this Conference you have indeed conferred upon me an honour of which I m justly proud. As to my being worthy of it, I will content myself with stating in the words of Goethe, "It is a great mistake to fancy oneself greater than one is, to value oneself at less than one is worth."

I am not here either to talk of vague ideals and indefinite promise which the politician often indulges in to gain your support, nor am I here to detail to you a catalogue of "dos" and "don'ts" which aged counselors invariably think it their duty to do. But I will submit just a few observations touching the Youth movement for your earnest consideration.

The Non-Brahmin movement as I understand it, stands for the equal treatment of all human beings: for the abolition of caste and caste monopoly; for natural rights as opposed to custom; for man against a system. It is opposed to the mode of social conduct known as Brahminism which fixed for every man a station in life by the accident of his birth. Have the people understood all these principles or having understood do they act up to them? Are we anywhere near the goal? The answers to these questions will enable us to judge the progress of the movement. I confess that the answers are far from satisfactory. I believe I am right when I say that the ideals have not reached the masses, and that a large section of the population is still under the baneful system of caste and cling to it with a pathetic adherence, not to

mention of those who, no more believing in it than does a foreigner maintain it and use it for the material advantages to be derived from society. Many believe that the Non-Brahmin movement is against only the predominant caste – the Brahmins and be content with attacking the supremacy of the Brahmin without in their turn giving up the system which I call Brahmanism and of which they are more particular than the Brahmins themselves. I am inclined to call every one who sincerely or otherwise believes in the system a Brahmin. Considered thus the majority are Brahmins; only they fall into two categories the threaded and the thread-less. The Non-Brahmins, they, that have as their ideals the abolition of caste and of monopoly by birth, the equality of men and the dignity of labour are still in a minority. Those who act up to these ideals are fewer still. Hence it is that you must constantly strive to keep them in view in every action of yours, to deserve to call yourselves the Non-Brahmin youth. If you forget these ideals your efforts will be of no avail, and your movement will do more harm than good by spreading class hatred, and by perpetuating the very evils, which the Non-Brahmin movement was indented to remove.

Youth

Talking of youth, you will permit me to says what I understand by the term "YOUTH." To me it does not signify merely a section of the population who by reason of some arbitrary age limit come to be called so, nor does it refer solely to the student population. It includes the labourer in the fields, the worker in the factory, the petty trader and the rich Zamindar. It knows no barriers of caste, creed or colour. It is rather with reference to the spirit and outlook upon life that youth has be to be distinguished from other categories into which humanity falls. Hope and enthusiasm, freedom from prejudices, love of liberty, boundless energy and liveliness – these are the distinctive characteristics of youth. The youth of a country on account of these form its most important asset. It is needless for me to tell you the part that youth has played in the history of the world. The pageant of youth through the ages is the most inspiring theme. Youth has very many achievements to its credit. It has undertaken many a mission and carried it out successfully but it has always been at the bidding of the elders. Now, however, it has acquired a self consciousness. Youth has organized itself all the world over, and stands on its own feet. It is seeking to solve all, by itself, not merely national problems but international problems. Its methods are

different from those of the elders. Diplomacy, intrigue, formalities and ceremonies – these it abhors. Youth thus has come to play new role in the world. The League of Youth may succeed where the League of Nations fails.

In our country more than in any other, the youth have a new role to play. They have to stand up against the Rule of Custom. Custom is a huge octopus gripping India in its tentacles. The country must be freed from its grip before it can advance and march along with the other countries of the world. The task is one which requires boundless energy, enthusiasm and a real love of liberty. To search for these qualities in any quarter but that of youth is to search in vain. The spirit of friendly rivalry so peculiar to the young folk is another factor which renders them fit to undertake and accomplish this difficult task.

With these observations I appeal to you to take up the work of social reconstruction. Calling yourselves the Non-Brahmin youth, you cannot do better than to act up to the ideals which form the basis of the Non-Brahmin movement as I understand the term. You must inculcate these ideals in your fellow human beings, even in the remotest village. The lines on which you should work, you know best. I will not indicate them to you but you will permit me to touch upon some subjects in which I am interested.

There is for instance the curse of untouchability. I need not waste your time by recounting to you the evils resulting there from. Enough has been said about the necessity and desirability of removing that curse but I merely wish to point out that in order to realize the ideal of the dignity of man, untouchability must go. Further it is necessary, that it should be blotted out, if you want to give equal opportunities to all. I wish you know what a great drawback it is to be an untouchable. The legitimate doors of free and fair competition are shut against the untouchables in practice. The so called untouchable does not derive the full benefits from society to which he is entitled. Why, he is altogether outside the pale of society. It is up to you to address this grievance. I know it is a difficult and delicate task, to be accomplished only by our enthusiasm and energy. If you do not succeed nobody else will. The problem is one which must be tackled by the young and is capable of solution only at their hands.

Then you have to educate the people on the dignity of labour. No man ought to be condemned as low by reason of the work he is engaged

in. In our country, it is very essential that people ought to understand this ideal. Work of any kind should not be despised. Work is not a curse, it is the prerogative of intelligence, the only means to manhood and the measure of civilization. Savages do not work. The growth of a sentiment that despises work is an appeal from civilization to barbarism. It is because people have not felt what is dignity of labour, that in this country work is regulated by caste, the higher caste taking to better kinds of work, the lower being doomed to the meaner ones. Why should it be? Every man should be given the freedom of choice of profession. Capacity, not caste should decide what work a man is fit for. It is for you to spread this idea to the ignorant masses of India.

Friends! When you done these you will have achieved a glorious success. You will have ennobled man. Every Indian then will have the opportunity to full manhood unhampered by any system. If I have laid emphasis on these two ideals (in fact one and the same) it is because, without a realization of these, India will never be a free country. Freedom implies self-respect and self-respect is impossible of attainment without these ideals. Lack of self respect rather an inability to appreciate self-respect is responsible for the subjections of our women, the treatments of the "untouchables" and the helpless condition of the masses. There are a number of other fields to which you can turn your activities and be useful to your fellow human beings. But your ultimate success lies in making every Indian realise the value of self-respect.

As to what methods you are to adopt, how you are to plan your campaign, I will not make any suggestion in particular. You must choose your own weapons. Avoid the company of the orthodox. "Religion in danger" is their cry. They merely cling to ritual and call it religion. In my opinion there can be no greater religion than devotion to social service.

Then the so called educated man is another obstacle probably. The educated men are fast forming themselves into another caste in India. They often feel that they have no lot or part with the rest of their unfortunate countrymen. They assume a certain superiority which is even more detestable than onr based on caste. The true value of education consists not merely in acquiring knowledge but in imparting that knowledge to your less fortunate fellow beings. Those of you who call themselves educated ought to be careful not to cerate an impression

that you are different from and superior to the ordinary man in the street.

The family is another factor you should take note of. Very often it happens that you are helpless against it. You must educate the family in that case and bring into your point of view and not break away from it. These are some of the obstacles in your way. You should not despair. If you hold fast to your principles and do not lose your courage and independence, you are bound to overcome them in the long run. You have as youth, a definite contribution to make to the whole fabric of culture of the nation. This is a source of encouragement to you. One other suggestion. You must be practical. It is all very well to talk of ideals. But no ideal is ever capable of realization if it is divorced from practical considerations.

- *Revolt*, 15 September 1929

Nellore Social Conference

Welcome Address

At Nellore, the Non-brahmin Social Conference was held under the presidency of Mr. A. Ramasami Mudaliar, President, Corporation of Madras. Khan Bahadur Janab Yah Ali, B.A., B.L., Chairman or the Reception Committee then read his address of welcome from which we extract the following:-

The question of social reform has, to my mind, a special importance in this country, because of its enormous diversity and complexity. On the one hand there is the Hindu society broad based on a system of caste, which, however justifiable its origin might be has ultimately resulted in splitting up the society into numerous isolated castes and sub-castes with no centralizing force or element to maintain its compactness or solidarity; on the other hand, there exists the Mussalman community maintaining its integral existence organized on a principle of social equality intense but presenting social problems of its own somewhat peculiar and equally complex. Besides these two, there are other minor communities constituting the body politic maintaining however their own integral life with their peculiar problems of no mean importance. It is impossible to gainsay the fact that in this museum of cultures there has been no blending of these groups into one solid compact society, even though for centuries past these respective elements have lived together side by side. The vital problem before the social reformers of

this country – a problem the like of which has not been faced by any nation as yet in the world's history is how to bring about a harmonious organisation or these heterogeneous elements into one homogenous society functioning as one organic unit bereft of all those time-honoured, though time-outlived, institutions which have been the bane of the society so long.

Whether as a result of natural conservation or in consequence of being enslaved by custom and superstition or due to any other causes of an ultra social origin, the Indian has by nature been averse to any cataclysmic social reform and each step in that direction has invariably drawn out a volume of resistance which has steadily retarded the pace of social progress. The first inroad into the superiority and inferiority complex was made by the indigenous movement of Buddhism which for a time revolutionized and perhaps liberalized the Hindu society. The advent of Islam with its virile principle of social equality and brotherhood of mankind and its dynamic force was the first factor which occasioned a ripple on the sea of Hindu orthodoxy but that culture also domiciled in the soil exercising no considerable or lasting influence in altering the aspect of that social life. The last but not the least inroad into the Hindu society by the western science and western culture brought in the wake of the British rule, has contributed to a considerable extent to unsettle the philosophic repose of the spiritualistic Hindu and rudely awakened him to his materialistic environment. The Indian who always used to behave like the camel of the Arab hiding the head under the sands whenever a typhoon passed and soon after it spent itself, raised its head and went on measuring its steps in the sands oblivious of the storm and its effects, cannot, however, afford any longer to ignore the storms that are too often raging in all directions against the archaic citadel in which he has been living. It seems to me, therefore, that when once the social problem has been realized and it has been observed that the tide has risen and whether we will like it or not, the tide will carry us aloft, it is essential that we should take stock of the situation and determine carefully and in a circumspect manner the course that we will have to take in order that we may safely and successfully reach the destination.

At the threshold of any discussions of the specific problem facing us today lies the vexed question, which has latterly assumed considerable prominence, to wit, the extent to which social reform can be achieved

by legislation. While just now the Child Marriage Restraint Bill has passed through both the Houses of the Imperial Legislature and is awaiting the assent of the Governor-General, while the report of the Age of Consent Committee is under the consideration of the Government and the public is eagerly awaiting its publication, while in our own province, we have the legislation with regard to the Devadasis, the enquiry relating to the Brothels, the amendments made from time to time in the local enactments to remove the bar of untouchability, we have, on the other hand, a storm of protest raised against some of those pieces of legislation founded upon an apprehension that religions and religious principles are in danger. On other hand, radical reformer cries that the Legislation is not making such vast progress and such deeper inroads as he desires, on the other hand, the orthodox element is vehemently raising the banner of revolt and is organizing its religious forces to discountenance such onslaughts on religion by means of legislation. Before introducing very drastic revolutions in family life, it seems essential that the most anxious attention should be paid to improve and augment educational facilities for the other sex. Literacy and education should be the bedrock of all social progress and without these steadying elements, the social changes can only lead to disruption rather than to really substantive and stable progress. With the advance of education it goes without saying, that the vast majority of the evils obtaining within the household which have handicapped the progress of the country will disappear and the reform thereafter will be easier, more rapid and more welcome. One has only to peruse the works written by the foreign observers like Miss Mayo and others to realize the disgust which the worst aspect of our family and social lives have caused on foreign minds and if only as an incentive to self realization, self knowledge and self rectification, I would welcome that publication, however much the jaundiced eyes of its writer may have tarnished the fair name of India. The lesson that Miss Mayo has taught to India, to my mind, seems to be not to dislike the administration which has rendered the publication of such an account possible but to turn the telescope within and by a process of introspection to study our real lives with a view to set our home in order.

I have already adverted to the intercaste relationship obtaining in the Hindu society and of the unmistakable indications in the horizon of the disappearance of the old order. It is a matter of happy augury that

the campaign of (sic) untouchability and the endeavours to redeem and elevate the depressed classes have been bearing very commendable fruits and the higher classes cannot afford to ignore the portentious signs of the times and to alienate the feelings of such a large slice of humanity who are now struggling for their rights clamouring for a suitable place in the society which they have a right to belong. Intermingled with this question of intercaste relationship is the still larger question of communal amity. The fusion of the Hindu and Mussalmaan communities is a problem pertaining not only to the political field but also to the social. Indeed, it appears to me to be of the utmost social importance. It is for the future social reformer to consider whether he would revel in his own Maha Sabha, in his own Shuddi and Sankatan movements (*the reference is to the Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj respectively – editors*) and keep himself isolated feeding upon envy, hatred and revenge or whether he will take a broader outlook of the best and the noblest aspirations of the country and enlarge his social vision shorn of all pettiness and narrow mindedness….

It is now-a-days more fashionable to indulge in tall talk about politics and to ignore other fields of activity to the great detriment of the country, but I need hardly reiterate that emancipation from social evils is the surest sign of emancipation from political bondage and no society can really be happy in its political liberty without being well-organised and free from social disruption. The cancer which corrodes into society and undermines its well being also affects its political existence in a more potent measure. It is therefore of supreme importance that greater attention should be paid by the leaders of the country to this aspect of the country's existence if it is desired that the real progress of the nation should be achieved in a lasting and abiding manner.

- *Revolt*, 13 October 1929

3.2 Some Non Brahmin Leaders

The Raja Saheb of Panagal: Leader of the Non-Brahmins

A Life-Sketch of Public Activities

Early life and education

Raja Ramarayaningar came from an ancient Kshatriya family long domiciled in South India. A scion of a noble family with great traditions of learning and culture the Raja Saheb gave early promise of the greatness that he was to achieve later in life. His ancestors were Velamas who claimed to be the earliest Kshatriyas to come to the South and settle in the Telugu country. Born in 1866, he like other members of his family was taught Telugu and Sanskrit, in which he soon became proficient. Happening to come in contact with some English educated boys of his own age, he was filled with a desire to study English also. After a few months of private study he joined the Triplicane High School in 1882. The interest in and love for the classical language that he developed at this time continued throughout his life. The teachers loved him because of his high character and studious habits and among the students, none was more popular than he. His unique charm of manners and innate spirit of generosity and helpfulness attracted to him the abiding loyalty and friendship of many among his classmates. Four years later he passed the matriculation examination and joined the Presidency College. Here his early education in Sanskrit stood him in good stead and there has not been to this day, perhaps another whose scholarship did greater honour to the degree. He graduated in 1893 taking advanced chemistry as his optional subject. In 1899 he passed the M.A. Degree examination in Philosophy and Dravidian languages (with Telugu advanced) having in the meantime completed the B.L. course in the Law College. Keenly interested in all progressive movements as he was, he did not remain long, after his educational career was over. He was nominated a fellow of the Madras University, in which capacity he did some very good work

His first training in public life was in the District Board of North Arcot. The next step in public life was taken when in 1912 he was returned to the Imperial Legislative council by the Landlords and Zamindars of Southern India. His work in that sphere was of such a character that

Lord Hardinge more than once selected him for special compliment. On the few occasions he spoke in the Council, he spoke with the force of conviction that came of close study, deep insight, and painstaking observation. The main work that he did as a member of the Imperial Legislature was to give a fillip to the forces of reform and progress at work in the midst of Hindu society. He pleaded hard and with unabating fervour all the while he was a member of the Council for the amelioration of the lot of the oppressed, the suppressed, and the down-trodden. He eventually succeeded to a very great extent in driving home to the minds of the powers that be, the conviction that a policy of placating the classes alone, neglecting the masses and their welfare, would not prove paying in the long run. He wanted all Provincial Governments to have separate officers and departments to look after the welfare and promote the interest of the depressed classes, and it may be said without fear of contradiction that to him belongs a large share of the credit for the creation of a separate department and a special officer in this province for that purpose at a later date. In 1915 he was elected President of the Third Andhra Conference and the brilliant address he delivered is full of the fire and patriotism marked also by good sense and sober judgment.

It was really this sympathy and solicitude for the well being and uplift of the underdog that led him to cast his lot with the Non-Brahmin movement when it was started by the late Dr. T. M. Nair and Sir. P. Theagaroya Chettiar in 1917. The Raja Saheb felt not only that a separate organization was necessary for the betterment of the lot of the Non Brahmin communities, he also felt that, if the Non Brahmins allowed any more time to slip their hands by remaining in lethargy and indifference, they would be crushed down by the intelligentsia and made to sweat and slave as hewers of wood and drawers of water for ever. He had no hesitation therefore to ally himself with the twin founders of the Non-Brahmin movement when the call for rally was sounded in the interests of a community that he loved so well. It was true that feeling was running high in those days and that any one who identified himself with the movement had to be prepared for any amount of misunderstanding, abuse, and obloquy. But the thorough-going democrat that he was, the Raja Saheb did not care for the frowns or favours of anyone – his one and only ambition was to work for the cause of whose essential loftiness, justice and equity he was convinced. He knew that millions of his countrymen were suffering under untold

hardships and difficulties as a result of a social system which exalted the accident of birth over everything else, and he was also convinced that, though constituting the bulk of the people of the province contributing the largest portion of the revenues of the Government the Non Brahmins as a community were in a really pitiable plight so far as political power was concerned.

Chief Minister 1920-1926

As a result of his own endeavours and earnest advocacy of the cause both in India and England – he went to the latter and tendered evidence before the Joint Parliamentary committee in 1918 – the Non-Brahmins not only came in for a measure of protection when the Montague Chelmsford reforms were brought into force in the shape of a reservation of seats, they also had their eyes opened to the need for organization and self-assertion. And both these factors worked to the advantage of the party when the elections followed the passing of the Government of India Act of 1919. In the contests, the Non-Brahmin candidates put up by the Party were successful in sufficiently large numbers to force the hands of the Governor of the province at the time to call for the leader of the Party and form the first Ministry. Impressed as he was by the meritorious services rendered by the Raja Saheb to the party and the cause that it was upholding, the late Sir P. Theagaroya Chettiar recommended his name for a ministership. And the confidence placed in the Raja Saheb, it was clear to the late Sir. P. Theagaroya himself before his death was fully justified. The Raja Saheb conducted himself to the satisfaction of all, and during the two terms of office he had as Minister, he did unforgettable service to the country in general, and to the Non-brahmin communities in particular. He had very high ideals of education, co-operation, social reform and philanthropy. He did not, however, stop with precepts; for he has succeeded in translating his ideals into practice in many ways. He has established a secondary school and a poor house at Kalahasti. He has also established a free school and a hostel for agriculturists and artisans. He has made endowments one of which is to the University of Madras for the encouragement of scientific publications in Telugu.

There was not a single department under his control on which he had not left a lasting impress of his personality and patriotism. In the matter of the Indianisation of the services on which the leader of the country had been keen for decades past, the Raja Saheb enhanced the pace to

the utmost possible extent. In fact, it is admitted on all hands that no minister in any of the provinces has done so much for Indianising the services as he had. His scheme for the reorganization of the Public Health Department; his work in the direction of promoting rural medical relief by subsidizing medical men to settle down in villages; his persistent fight – attended with no small measure of success – for the improvement of water supply and communications in the long neglected parts of the countryside; his supreme interest in the development of the indigenous systems of medicine, symbolized and memoralised in the Indian School on Medicine that we have now in the City; his able and unceasing advocacy of the interests of the Adi Dravidas and other depressed communities testified by the fact that it was during his regime as Minister that the members of these classes acquired a large number of seats in the local bodies – all these will ever remain fresh in our memory to remind us of the great departed leader and his unique services to our province. And then, what shall we say of that crowning achievement of his office as Minister – the passing of legislation for the control and right conduct of the religious endowments. The Hindu Religious Endowments Act may well be regarded as the greatest piece of social and religious reform achieved during the present century. It cut at the root of an organized system of corruption, evil and misuse of funds that had been flourishing in our midst for years past, and that it was left to our late leader to stamp it out and bring order where chaos prevailed, is a matter of which everyone of us has good reason to be proud for all time to come. Using the small force in the Council under his command as Blucher's contingent (*the reference is to the Prussian General who fought at Waterloo – editors*), he brought not only the Council but also a weak-kneed Government to his feet. In fine, the Raja had most of the qualities that go to the making of a true statesman, and History will assuredly place him in the line of the great administrators of India. In recognition of his meritorious services in the capacity of Minister for Local Self-Government, he received the hereditary title of the Raja in 1923.

To the Non-Brahmins of not only our province, but of sister provinces as well, the loss of the Raja Sahib is something that is inconceivably severe. We have none in our midst to-day who can be said to be an equal to him in qualities of leadership, and when we contemplate the prospect ahead we must be pardoned for saying that it all looks so drab and dreary.

– *Revolt,* 19 December 1928

Late Mr. O. T. Chettiar

A great leader of the non-brahmin community has passed away in the death of Dewan Bahadur O. Thanikachellam Chettiar, which took place on Sunday last. The late Mr. Thanikachellam was pre-eminently a self-made man. He had none of those adventitious circumstances as affluence of parents and influence of family to aid him in his early life. Naturally he started his career in a small way – as a clerk in a firm of solicitors in Madras. But he had plenty of grit, energy and enterprise in him, and these qualities cleared for him the way to success. When the late Sir Theagaroya Chettiar started the Non-brahmin Movement, he found in "O.T" a very valuable lieutenant, capable of not only shouldering a good portion of the spade work that had to be done, but also of imparting to the movement a vitality and vigour which was so necessary to make it popular and respected. As a member of the Legislative Council, he won laurels, both as a debater and as a shrewd politician, of which few of his colleagues could boast; as a President of the corporation, he did work of a character which would for all time be remembered by the rate-payers of the city; lastly, as Chief Judge of the Small Causes Court, he demonstrated to the world at large that there was nothing like congenital incompetence in the case of Non-brahmin lawyers to occupy honoured positions on the bench – only they lacked opportunities at the hands of an unsympathetic Government to show their worth and capacity. There was nothing mean or mealy mouthed about him, he was as clean-minded as he was straightforward and not even his worst opponents could say of him, even while he was in the midst of bitter political fights, that he hit anyone below the belt. These qualities are so rare in politicians of the present day that one feels all the more oppressed and depressed in mind when one thinks of the death of such a good and great man at so early an age. May his soul rest in peace!

- *Revolt*, 28 July 1929

3.3 Impasses in Political Non-brahminism: Caste and Representation

Separate Electorates

Mr. E. V. Ramasami Naicker has issued the following statement to the press:

I am surprised to read the statement that Mr A. Ramasami Mudaliar has issued on the question of separate electorate. The statement is obviously made by Mr.Mudaliar in his personal capacity and not as a representative of the Non Brahmin party, though the "Hindu" and other Madras journals have utilized it under such headlines as "Non-Brahmin Leader's views".

Communal representation in all matters is still the creed of the Non Brahmin party. The party was nourished and brought up on this principle. The party has gained a large adherence among the masses owing to the steadfastness shown in the realization of this principle. It remains to be seen how far the party would maintain its strength among the people if, according to the advice of Mr. Ramasami Mudaliar, it throws to the four winds the demand for separate electorates as well as for reservation of seats in joint constituencies.

The case for separate electorates, says Mr.Mudaliar, was negatived once and for ever by the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1919. The question cannot be reopened because, Mr.Mudaliar remembers, the Non-Brahmins tolerated the decision of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. The Non-Brahmin party which was in its infancy at that time, had not the strength to resist the decision and had therefore to make the best of the bad situation in which it found itself. But now that the party has grown in strength and the people at large have realized the evils of the decision of 1919, it would be absurd to impose the decision of two years ago as the laws of Medes and the Persians (*a biblical phrase that denotes unchanging laws – editors*). Again, in Mr.Mudaliar's opinion, the question cannot be reopened unless an extraordinarily strong case has been made out for doing so. I would like to know, what, according to Mr.Mudaliar, would constitute "an extraordinarily strong case". To say that no point has been made out for reopening this all important question is to give away the whole case for Non Brahmins. Mr. Ramasami Mudaliar has himself drawn vivid pictures in the columns

of the "Justice" of the grievous wrongs that the Non Brahmin community is still suffering as regards both official and non official representation. The monopolists still hold undisputed sway in all walks of life. After ten years of "toleration" of the decision of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, the position of the Depressed classes, the Mussalmans, the Christians, and other Non Brahmin Communities has not only not improved but has visibly deteriorated.

In view of the retrograde recommendations of the Nehru Committee and in view of the reactionary evidence that the Bombay government tendered through Messers Turner and Griffiths, I see grave danger ahead of the Non Brahmin cause being lost not only before the Simon Commission but before the bar of public opinion. I therefore appeal to all Non Brahmins particularly leaders like Mr.Ramasami Mudaliar to bestir themselves and educate the public in favour of separate electorates and proportionate representation in the services.

- *Revolt*, 7 November 1928

No Brahmin Please

We publish elsewhere the news of the decision of the Non-Brahmin party of Bombay to "shed its 'communalist appellation' and to call itself "a peasants party" with "Dominion Status for the present as its goal". This drastic change in the very name of the party itself indicates the broad outlook of the Non-Brahmins of Bombay. 'The Peasants' Party', is indeed a wise decision, for we are sure that more than ninety percent of the peasants come under the 'communalist appellation'. If, again, instead of 'peasants', it is termed as the 'labourers party'; a greater percentage, why, even cent per cent will be seen to belong to the 'communalist appppellation'. If the Non-brahmins of Bombay, (we hope to be excused for using this term) really attach much importance to the name of the party, and if they are so serious about having a more embracing name to it, we shall most joyfully invite such a noble spirit.

When once the Brahmins become either peasants or labourers, and begin to be one with either of them, that moment, they naturally cease to be Brahmins. For, it is in that spirit the Brahmins are found fault with. We condemn Brahminism, for nothing else than its exploitation of the masses, in the names of god and religion. Brahminism, as it exists lives to eat, and not eats to live. Brahminism and Labour are poles asunder. It earns its living, for the most part, not by any physical or intellectual labour, but by the six inches *kusha* grass and other religious books.

It is a matter for gratification that the party, whether it sheds its old name or not has as its cardinal principle, "the protection of agriculturist India from social, religious and economic exploitation by Mullahs, Moulvis, Priests or usurpers". The Non Brahmins of Bombay have fully realised the futility of wasting their energy wholly on political issues and have come to understand the root causes of the disease, from which the society is suffering. The political Brahmin, we are aware, is not in any way more poisonous than the social Brahmin. The peasants and other labourers are daily falling prey to the priestly class. Years of strenuous work in our province have taught us the severe lesson that politics is a game not worth the candle. Eminent men among the Non Brahmin community, as a result of their unflinching attempts have successfully transplanted the political Brahmins; and yet there is no stop to the social degeneration of the people. Hence we were obliged to direct our whole energy and time towards social work, and with a

view to turn the present social system topsy-turvy and establish a living bond of union among all people irrespective of caste or creed, we founded the Self-respect movement. The achievements of the Self-respecters, in the short span of five years, are so great that a good portion of people in our province have ceased to be threatened by the words, god and religion.

And now, the present proposed policy of the Non Brahmins of Bombay serves as an impetus to our movement, and their determination to protect the agriculturists from social and religious exploitation by priests, is sure to be a beacon to those of our men who are being led by the noses. The proposals of the Non Brahmin party of Bombay, we hope, will be an incentive to our own Justice party to pay greater attention to the sphere of social reform.

The Non Brahmin Party of Bombay

Drastic changes in the policy of the Non Brahmin Party of Bombay, it is understood have been proposed by Mr. Jayakar, Secretary, in the course of a representation to the President of the party, the Hon. Mr. Jadhav, Minister, Bombay Government. Mr. Javalkar suggests the party should shed communalist appellation and should be called a Peasants Party with "Dominion Status for the present" as its goal. The cardinal principle for which the party should work should be protection of agriculturist India from social, religious and economic exploitation by Mullahs, Moulvis, priests or usurpers and any one accepting this principle, even if he be a Brahmin should be admitted into the party membership.

– *Revolt*, 23 June 1929

The Nellore Confederation

Many of our Non-Brahmin contemporaries have written a great deal already on the conference that is to meet very shortly at Nellore. The Conference is being held at a very critical period of the Non-Brahmin party. When we say critical, we don't refer to so much to the political aspect as to the social one. The Non Brahmins of the province have passed the stage of being merely satisfied with the 'loaves and fishes of office' as the monopolists call it. They have gone far beyond the stage of being enticed by a few appointments in the services. They have come to the painful realization that politics alone has not made them better. They feel their degrading position in society, and have discovered

how the time honoured customs in the name of God and religion, have plunged them in the mire of ignorance and slavery. They have understood the real causes of the age long divisions of society and have determined to lay the axe at the root of the evils. Hence we said the conference takes place at a critical period of the history of South India. We therefore feel it our duty to lay before the public the importance of the confederation.

The necessity for the immediate reconstruction of society has been so keenly felt by the Non-Brahmins of this province, the need for reform has been so often emphasized by the people that the confederation cannot afford to ignore the fact that the removal of social injustice is the first and foremost task before it. To achieve that end, the conference must lay out a clear programme of work and leave a solid foundation for an active propaganda of social reform in the country. We have almost grown sick of mere resolutions and we want more practical achievements. The conference which assembles after such a late hour after the demise of the leader of the party (*the Raja of Panagal – editors*) has a more difficult task to perform in the field of social service, than it has hitherto done or has been supposed to have done. The confederation should not lose sight of the world current and should in no circumstances fail to carry the people with the current of progress. The members of the Confederation should realize that they have not advanced in the achievement of the chief aims of the movement as much as they ought to have. They should not forget that their progress in the past has been very limited. The leaders of the movement must take particular care in considering the importance of social reform before everything.

The two main issues before the conference, we understand are the inclusion or non-inclusion of Brahmins within the party and the election of a leader. The first question has been elaborately dealt with from different points of view by our Non-Brahmin contemporaries. Different opinions have been expressed by individuals. For our part, the problem does not seem to be as difficult as it is to others. For we hold decided opinion on this point. We had occasion to show in these columns in connection with the Non-Brahmin party of Bombay, how the inclusion of Brahmins in the party at this stage at any rate, is not only not desirable, but detrimental to the interests of the movement. So far as the Nellore confederation is concerned we are at a loss to know how this question has cropped up as an urgent issue.

It is a settled fact that the Brahmins as a class are determinedly opposed to all ideas of progress and all Brahmins from the most learned scholar to the most idle *purohit* are dead against the abolition of caste. Whereas the Non-Brahmins as a community, thanks to the divisions between them and thanks to the originators of the divisions decidedly desire the destruction of caste, the Brahmins as a community uniformly hold that if the caste system is destroyed a deathblow will be dealt to Hinduism, which in its turn will overthrow the superiority of Brahmins. The rungs of the social ladder are so arranged that the top most rung is inaccessible from the next one. That is why the above mentality as regards the caste system, has become more or less the general feature of both the communities.

When the existing evils in our society are proved to be the natural and inevitable outcome of the invidious system of caste, we know not what else is required to emphasise the overbearing importance of the destruction of caste. In our opinion this is the fundamental principle on which we the people of India have to proceed towards the achievement of our final goal. Organisations for bringing about all the divergent castes into a homogeneous fraternity and a harmonious whole have cropped up throughout the country. We are also witnessing how the most advanced of Brahmins like Mr. Malaviya are opposed to this noble and humane task. We are experiencing everyday how the 'spotless' of Brahmins in the 'patriotic' circle are plotting against those movements and individuals who aim at the destruction of caste and similar reforms. Incidents of the history of the Tamilnadu Congress and the Khaddar Board ought to have taught us sufficiently how even a 'spotless' Brahmin can destroy or Brahminise any movement or organization which is in its infancy. Incidents in history where the Brahmin intrusion has destroyed partially or wholly even the most rational of religions and the best forms of Government are not found wanting. Therefore, so far as the social side of the Non-Brahmin movement is concerned, we are strongly convinced of the dangers of admitting the Brahmins into our fold, at this stage. As for the political manipulations, we think it better to leave the question entirely to the discretion of the political party in the Council.

Of the second issue in the conference, the less said the better. We on behalf of the self-respect movement wish to observe that the leader who is elected or chosen must adjust himself to the broad and noble outlook of the masses who have welcomed with one uniform voice,

the cardinal principles of the self-respect movement.

– *Revolt*, 29 September 1929

Fight to the last

We had occasion to refer in our last article to the impending danger to a movement which has been started by the most foreseeing social workers of South India but which is today unhappily being roughly handled by a politically-intoxicated section of the educated group of the Non-Brahmin community. We have been time and again stressing upon the dangers that would inevitably follow at the admission of Brahmins in the Federation of Non-Brahmins (*that is, the South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF) or the Justice party – editors*).

We have pointed out how the question of the inclusion of Brahmins is nothing but an unwitting attempt to lay the axe at the root of the best of democratic movements. Ours is an organisation purely democratic, in the strict sense of the term. Real democracy hates aristocracy of any kind. Aristocracy by birth is as harmful, and even more harmful than aristocracy in wealth or intellect. A Brahmin is an aristocrat by birth who holds a firm control over the intellect of the masses thereby establishing his superiority over the rest of our people. Even as the French Constitution prohibits any member of the Royal family becoming the President of the French Republic, the originators of the Non-brahmin movement thought it wise and safe to exclude the monopolist element from the organization. Ever since its birth, the movement has traced its way through the dark paths of thorns and bushes, through the tumultuous waves of political manipulations of self-seeking individuals and through the storm and thunder of the monopolists of the country. In short, the movement has survived, thanks to the social oppressions of the Brahmins, the several onslaughts that were made from within and without.

At the end of the last elections, the political party of the Non-brahmin movement suffered some reverses, which for the nonce, appeared to be greatly discouraging. But that was a blessing in disguise. The defeat showed to them how their work in the past has not been so much satisfactory to the masses, as they hoped to be. It was a period of low tide for the party and indirectly to the movement. Again a fresh start was given to it by the forceful and practical work of the Self-respect movement. The newly started one took fire with the younger generation,

and the spirit of the Non-brahmin agitation was diffused throughout the Tamil country, and even beyond. The tremendous achievements of the Self-respect movement within a period of four years took hold of the minds of the masses so firmly that the echo of the movement is heard today in far off lands and islands. It is no exaggeration when we say that in Burma and Ceylon, almost all the Tamil speaking people are whole-heartedly in accord with the principles of the Self-respect movements. Thus, as days went on the old movement began to be little by little merged in the new one, until the one was identified with the other. The first Self-respect Conference has decided not to admit Brahmins into its fold; and what is the S.I.L.F. going to do? We wait for the answer.

By the unbounded enthusiasm and tireless work of the youths, the movement has emerged unscathed from the blazing fire of opposition and suppression. In their selfless work for the amelioration of the downtrodden masses, our youths have carried the noble massage of the movement to every nook and corner of the Tamilnad, and have laid the foundation for the growth of a democratic spirit in the country. While some of our elders were playing with fire and making love to it, within the Council and outside, the youths of the movement were making a life and death struggle against the forces of orthodoxy and obscurantism. They only can realize what impediments they had to face on their way, in how many ways Brahmins or Brahminisim tried to upset their work, and what methods they pursued to undo their attempts. The ignoble task of setting up our own people against us, the contemptible method of misrepresenting the ideals of the movement, and the despicable manner of misinterpreting the objectives of the movement have not yet vanished from the sights of our youths.

If even under the above circumstances, the Brahmins had succeeded to a certain extent in obliterating some of our easy achievements, and in blockading our progress, we know not what else they cannot do, if they are openly admitted into our fold. We are sure, however, the youths of the land will not be so unthinking as to give our only sword to our enemy.

In our humble opinion, social reform is not such an easy game as politics. The policy of "Tickle me Tobby and I will tickle thee" may be fruitful in politics, but never in social reform. The task of social reconstruction is a play with the sword. A slight slip will end in a cut. A wrong swing will result in a thrust. An intelligent sword-player, however

skilled he is, will not agree to have his sword soaked in poison. It is not only deadly to him but to the audience also, whose fate would be final if the hilt of the sword loses his grip. That is the game we are playing now. Are the youths, we ask, going to allow the soaking of their sword in poison?

– *Revolt*, 6 October 1929

Questions Answered

(By "Plain Speaker")

I give below the answers to some of the questions put by Mr. N. Subramania Aiyar in the issue of the HINDU. The questions raised are of the utmost public interest and importance and hence I shall take them one by one and try to answer them.

Q. "If justice is the end and democracy the means, what are they exactly in their honest and understandable import?"

A. Justice of course means fair dealing with all people irrespective of caste and creed, nation or rank. Democracy is Government of the people by the people of the country.

Q. "If to the Justice Party, as to the other political parties, Swaraj is the goal, what is Swaraj?"

A. This question is a very difficult one to be summarily answered. It presumes the existence of more than one party, having Swaraj as the goal. Before we proceed to examine into the connotation of the term "swaraj' if that is the goal of the Justice party, I desire to know the *so-called parties* who are really aspiring for Swaraj.

If so what is the kind of Swaraj for which they are a severally working? When it is taken for granted that all these parties work for Swaraj, where is the necessity for the existence of several parties if all of them mean one and the same thing by setting their ideal on Swaraj? The truth is with some parties, Swaraj is self-government in the sense that they themselves should enjoy the monopoly of the *Government of the country*. In this sense, Swaraj is not the ideal of the Justice Party. There are some others whose conception of Swaraj is a Government in which they can play any part in any manner they like. There are still some other leaders who want to work and move about under high sounding names without worrying themselves for an exact import of the term "Swaraj" since they are always on the alert to carve out something

substantially useful for themselves while the sun shines. A crore of rupees was subscribed to the Tilak Swaraj Fund and the public know how the fund was collected and managed. There is yet a fourth conception of Swaraj. This is because that some have fallen foul with the present British Raj and find themselves unable to exhibit all their idiosyncrasies with impurity and hence they cry for a changed Government i.e., a form of Swaraj. They say they are so immensely patriotic, it is their last resort, as per Dr. Johnson's dictum.

There are still sincere persons, who honestly believe that if we unite now, we can get complete independence and the moment we get full freedom all our social, political, religious and economic ills will automatically come to an end, and India will become a paradise on Earth. With great respect to such thinkers, I submit that this conception is too Utopian to be realised in the near future.

The ideal of Swaraj as understood by the Justice party does not conform to any of the conceptions mentioned above. The Justicites do realise the injury caused to a country by an alien Government. At the same time they are aware of the helpless condition of the nation and the force at the back of the Government with which we may have to fight and wring out Swaraj from them.

They have also to reckon the many and varied social and religious evils under which the nation has been smarting for centuries past and as a result of which unity has well nigh become an impossibility in this country. Composed as it is by a large number of castes and creeds, speaking various languages, following different social rules the problem of a united Indian nation is unique by itself and does not admit of comparison with the evolution of other countries on the face of this earth. India is verily a continent. Hence the Justicites feel that if every community or caste works for its own educational, social, economic amelioration then the nation would become composed of men best fitted to work for the political regeneration of this country.

Students of History and Literature would have heard of Edmund Burke, who in his famous book "Reflections on the French Revolution" writes:

"To be attached to the sub-divisions, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it was) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to man-kind. The interests of that portion of social

arrangement is a trust in the hands of all those who compose it."

It is this sacred trust that the leaders of the Justice party find themselves bound to discharge first and foremost, since they believe that in doing so they only work for the national regeneration in as much as this movement embraces within its fold more than 90% of the population. Similarly if every community strives for its own uplift and advancement, then the whole nation is bound to progress automatically. Thus the masses send their true representatives. These representatives undergo practiced training under a well established constitutional Government – a training involving the least risks. Gradually they are bound to monopolise every department of the Government and then we would have got Swaraj in reality though not in name. Thus in this comprehensive sense Swaraj is the goal for which the Justice party is working.

The other questions asked under this head are purely academic in character and as such outside the scope of practical politics.

Q: "If Justice meant equal opportunities for all caste and sects, may we ask equal opportunities to do what?"

A: "Equal opportunities for all people to participate in the administration of the country".

Q: "Is it to beg for doles of food, i.e., employment in the services controlled by other nations Governmental or non-Governmental – fawning on or foaming against them alternately?"

A: Plain questions indeed! They deserve to be answered plainly, I shall just explain what the "Justice" party does not mean by its demands.

It does not mean that all the Brahmins should be provided first before the case of Non-brahmin is taken into consideration. It does not mean that the bench and the Bar are the exclusive monopoly of the one only caste. "Begging for doles of food" – yes. They do not fight shy of this, since they have been reduced to beg irrespective of caste and creed. Food is indispensable to keep body and soul together. And begging is certainly more honourable than stealing and aggrandisement. "Employment in the services" – Why is this feigned aversion to the services! I am reminded of the "story of the fox and the grapes". It was the Brahmins that entered the government services from the very beginning in such large numbers. Having monopolised the services the incumbents began to patronise their own Kith with the result that

it gave rise to the stout opposition on the part of the Justice movement. Who is to be blamed for this? The aggressors should thank their own stars for bringing upon them the latest catastrophe of a Communal G.O.(1) Mr. N.S. Iyer refers to "fawning or foaming". Evidently Mr. Iyer refers to the Coimbatore decisions and the subsequent role played by Mr.A. Ramasami Mudaliar till now. May I submit that men like Bhupendranath Basu, Surendranath Banerjee and a host of others who have roared vehemently on the Congress Platforms against the present Government have not shown the least hesitation to be employed in the services controlled by a foreign government? After getting employed in discharging their official duties, they have done not a little to retard the national movement in India. But as soon as their period of service was over, they have once again gone back to their old pulpits and harangued about national honour, and indignity in accepting office under an alien bureaucracy. Now I leave it to the readers to realise for themselves in what camp real fawning or foaming is found in abundance.

Then Mr. Iyer observes, "If, again "public service" is the service undertaken by Government and paid for by the people, to be discharged by the best men available, is it not sheer repudiation of conscience to make birth any the smallest test of eligibility?"– Most certainly! The overwhelming majority of the Non-brahmins contribute the major portion of the revenue. They prefer having Non-brahmins to serve them. Is this against the dictates of conscience? Why should anybody presume that the Non-brahmins are made up of inferior metal? If birth is not at all to be taken into consideration in any department of life, is it lawful that a Brahmin young man however wicked in conduct, is allowed to enter into the Sanctum-Sanctorum of a temple whereas even the most pious man of 70 or 80 years of age is not allowed to enter simply because he happens to be born in a Non-brahmin family. Who is the author of this mischievous regulation in public life-based on the criterion of birth? Does not the conscience of Mr. Iyer revolt against this rule?

If merit is the consideration what was the unusual exhibition of merit by a Fourth Form boy to be made a Postal Superintendent to begin with! Then he proceeds to say that this proportional representation is of no use to the communities so represented. He further elucidates his point thus: "One can understand the advantage if a distribution of the sums doled as salaries is to be made among all the members of a particular community. If Mr. Ramasami Mudaliar or Mr. Satyamurthi

becomes minister – their salaries will not be made available for distribution per capita for all Mudaliars and Iyers." I am really very sorry that a fellow countryman should entertain such crude notions as these. Does it not follow from his reasoning that a man should not give his vote or consent unless he gets a benefit in return? Let me take an example. It is rumoured that Sir Sankaran Nair will be appointed Governor of Central Provinces instead of an English man. Will Mr. Iyer be glad at the appointment of an Indian only when he doles out every month something to Mr. Iyer and other Indians in response to whose agitations he is made a governor? The absurdity involved in this argument is too patent to need any further elucidation. Does not this argument savour of voters selling their votes which are quite illegal?

Mr. Iyer sums up his view-point of the present situation thus: "what is wanted is a clear and universally accepted definition of "*Nation*". This is a fit subject to be referred to the next session of the National Congress at Lahore. Then he enumerates certain indispensable characteristics of a nation and winds up by saving that England is no nation! I am afraid he is too much obsessed with the academic side of politics to take a correct perspective of men and matters. He is like the proverbial Vaidya who went to the market to fetch vegetables. How grossly erratic he is in his views, the march of time alone can prove to demonstration. Meanwhile I would earnestly entreat all my readers to remember that in politics more than in any other department of life, practice is a thousand times more difficult and more useful than precept. The age of tall talk is no more. Let us gird up our loins and be prepared for spade work.

- *Revolt*, 13 October 1929

All is Not Well that End Well

(By P. C. P.)

There is unholy satisfaction in some Non-Brahmin quarters that the Brahmin entry question did come up before the Nellore Confederation and was decided in the way it was done. The Brahmin himself, after the event, has been gracious enough to point out that he himself never wanted it. The Anglo-Indian seems to think that it was not the considered decision of prominent Non-Brahmins – whatever that might mean.

The question is not that what effect such a decision had upon others.

The question is: Has this suggestion itself of admitting the Brahmin any deleterious or enervating effect upon the Non-Brahmin movement as a whole?

It is perfectly clear that no Brahmin of any importance wanted entry. There is no use in blinking it. On the other hand, he has been in season and out of season, crying down the very movement. What the attitude of the Anglo-Indian is towards this question has been long immaterial. He may sometimes consider such a union dangerous to his narrower interests; he may at other times consider such a division as a standing reflection upon the prestige of his western politics and civilization. It all depends. Nor are we at the present moment concerned with that. As regards the Pro-brahmins among the Non-brahmins, there are those who by long association have come to regard any movement without the Brahmin in it as something inauspicious and there are others of them who have to live their political life upon the smile and in constant dread of the frown of the Brahmin.

Even as a political party, the Non-Brahmin Party had and even now has its own ideals. Those ideals may not be identical with those of any other political party in India. Or even if we accept for fiction's sake that all political parties in India have the same or similar ideals and ambitions, it does not mean and has never meant that all political attention must centre round a coalescing of all parties.

All the three political parties in England, which count at the present moment have the same object in view, the betterment of their country. But no one party under normal circumstances, devotes any great attention to win over to their side the members of other parties. It does happen sometimes but it is purely casual and not the result of any sustained policy or effort. Such being the case, there are ever so many political organizations in South India, by means of which the Brahmin can achieve all his objects and ambitions. To mention a few most prominent, there is the National Congress; there is the Liberal Party; there is the A.I.S.A.; and there is Varnashrama Dharma, certainly not the least of these. Remove the Brahmin from any of these organizations and that particular organization will cease to function. At its worst, no Brahmin can afford to accuse the Non-Brahmin party of occupying a worse status than that of the Varnashrama Dharmite. And there are enough Non-Brahmins of influence and importance in South India at the present moment who are prepared to maintain a very strict attitude

towards the Brahmin right up to the very end of the disappearance of Varnashrama Dharma. These you may classify as Self-respectors.

But says the political Brahmin, not all Brahmins are Varanashramites. The equally obvious retort is: Nor are all Non-Brahmins Self-respecters. The trouble is, that at present, there are as many political minded Non-brahmins with outstanding abilities as among the Brahmins, if not more so.

The Congress is accused of being a Brahmin organization; it is not, says the political Brahmin. Mr. R. K. Shanmugham the astutest politician in South India took the Brahmin at his word, entered the Congress and has become a Self-respector. He is there sticking in the political Brahmin's throat. The Brahmin can neither swallow him nor digest him. And all the time Mr. R. K. Shanmugham's reputation for sanity and sobriety is circling round the world. The South Indian Brahmin may one day burst.

It would have been simply a question of time and opportunity, say about three years back, for some of the ablest members of the Non-brahmin party to have entered the Congress – if it had shown signs of surviving – swamped it and driven the Brahmin to a corner. There was Mr. Shamugham's lead anyway. If others – we mean by others, such of the Non-brahmins as have a following and a stake in the Non-Brahmin party, coupled with outstanding ability and not mere door mats, for all and sundry to wipe their foot upon – if these others were then hesitating it was simply because they felt in their bones that the Congress, as a National institution, was doomed. And the death-knell of the Congress in the South was clearly sounded when two of the best known Congressmen in all India Messrs. George Joseph and R. K. Shanmugham were at the front of it at Nellore with hands uplifted against the Brahmin. That day, the political Brahmin collapsed.

Well, may the bewildered Brahmin lament, that at Nellore, this question was raised, without his own consent anyway, in order to dig the grave of the political Brahmin's pretensions. That is just it.

He does not believe in the political sincerity and good faith of such of the Non-Brahmins who at the risk of losing every shred of their reputation in their own party and with their own followers, attempted a friendly gesture towards the political Brahmin. He treats it as mere camouflage. And such of the political Non-brahmins who undertook

the risk, must have known by this time, at any rate, the risk they did run.

If one may make bold to express, in all humility, to our honoured leaders, one and all of them what is felt deeply throughout the Non-brahmin world, it is this: The Non-brahmin party can ill-stand such a strain as even discussing such a question or even thinking at all, that without the Brahmin in it, the Non-brahmin party cannot function, can achieve no good. If you think you are going to have headache, sure enough you will have it. It is ordinary human experience; it may very well be coverism (*an Australilan faith based on equivocation – editors)* or auto-suggestion. We shall leave it at that, with the simple prayer that for the respect of the party no one will think of having anything to do with the Brahmin with or without his request, for a period of ten years to come, at any rate. The preferable course would be not to dream of it at all, till Varnashrama Dharma is wiped off the face of the earth.

- *Revolt*, 20 October 1929

Some Reasons

(By Mr. S. M. Michael)

There are one thousand and one reasons why Brahmins were not admitted in the S.I L.F. The first and the most obvious reason is that it is the Non-brahmin party. One would have thought that there was no need to point out so simple and self-evident a truth but it becomes necessary now and then to labour the obvious. In everyday life we sometimes see that children have a clearer grasp of ordinary facts than grown up people. So also in public life occasions arise when the unsophisticated rank and file display a firmer hold over the basic principles of their party than some of their clever leaders who in spite of (or because of) their cleverness are sometimes apt to lose sight of elementary things. On such occasions laymen have a right to respectfully point out to their *Gurus* their mistakes and to correct them.

One of these simple and elementary truths is, I repeat, that in any movement which calls itself the Non-brahmin movement, a Non-brahmin movement in which room is found for Brahmins will be adjudged by all right-thinking men to be the most irrational contradiction in terms ever heard of even on this planet which Voltaire once described as "the lunatic asylum of the universe." But to call it a

"greater Non-brahmin movement", how shall one describe it? Is it not easily the grossest abuse of language in which anyone has indulged in the present year of Grace? No, call such a movement either the Hindu movement or the National movement or any other movement but, for goodness' sake, do not call it, the Non-brahmin movement at all! Even in those hectic days of his inexperience and perfervid pseudo-nationalism the present writer never dreamed of the possibility of including Brahmins in the Non-brahmin movement but suggested that the name of the party should be changed into the Social Democratic Party as a condition precedent to their inclusion. It is happy news that the suggestion was not seriously considered and that the very leaders who are now advocates – I hope they are only acting as a devil's advocates – of the pro-brahmin view were dead opposed to such a move then! With riper experience I congratulate them on the sound political instinct that actuated them at that time. Today if anyone else were to propose that the name of our party should be so altered as to permit the admission of all people I would be the first to oppose it. Fifteen years' political experience has taught me better.

Is it right, then, to try to perpetuate or at any rate to prolong the present communal cleavage? Absolutely. Indeed, it would be wrong if we failed to do so. It is a truism that self-preservation is the first law of life. The self-preservation, the growth and development of the Non-brahmin masses requires that they must organize themselves separately and solidly against the few who, in the name of Dharma, have exploited them. Having organized themselves they ought to preserve their organization intact until they come into their own socially, educationally and politically.

Be it remembered here that it is not the Non-brahmin but it is the Brahmin who originated this class cleavage. Long before the Non-brahmin movement was dreamed of by anybody, the Brahmin had introduced this distinction not only in everyday life but even in official records as the veriest tiro knows. Perhaps the Brahmin apologist will say that this was merely a "social" distinction. No greater absurdity could be imagined. Politics in all countries is the exact reflex of social life. It cannot be otherwise. And after all, social life is more than three fourths of life. Social improvement is the end and aim of politics. How could anyone in his senses expect that in India alone social life and politics would remain two distinct and unrelated factors for all time? The Non-brahmin movement was not founded by Dr. T. M. Nair or

Sir P. T. Chettiar or by Mr. O. K. Chettiar or Dr. Natesa Mudaliar. Its foundations were laid by the Brahmins themselves in the remote past when they first introduced this obnoxious distinction between themselves on the one hand and all other classes put together on the other. Do they not boast that ever since their mythological Kali Yuga commenced—no doubt, so far as the masses are concerned it has been a Kali Yuga in deadly earnest right throughout – there are only two castes in India, the Brahmins and the "Shudras" in which "odoriferous" term they include all those who are not Brahmins? Why did not these graceless *Mlechas* pass a resolution only two or three years ago in open conference at Tanjore (2) to that effect? Is it, then, hypocrisy or congenital idiocy that makes them whine about the injustice of dividing the people into Brahmins and Non-brahmins?

Their objection to a separate Non-brahmin association is still more strange, surprising and inexplicable in view of the formation of a Brahmin Mahasabha. We, Non-brahmins, shall not imitate their bad example; we will not be so foolish as to say that their organisation is uncalled for; we shall not abuse them as rank communalists; we freely admit that they are right in having openly organized themselves against us; the same law of self-preservation that justifies us justifies them also. It is good for us and good for them and good for India that our society is thus for the first time in history organised in two distinct and separate camps with an open declaration of war. It shall be and it must be war to the death between the two. There can be no quarter or mercy, no compromise in this war. Either the one or the other must triumph – autocracy, spiritual and social which is synonymous with Brahmanism or democracy social, intellectual and political represented by Non-Brahmanism. One of these two must conquer. They cannot exist side by side indefinitely for ever. Therefore, it is well that this frank communal cleavage has arisen. Let shallow-witted folks wail that this communalism is a curse. The future impartial historian will call it the greatest good fortune that has ever befallen this country.

Now, what will our Brahmin friends say if a Non-Brahmin were foolish enough to seek admission in the Brahmin Mahasaba? What shouts of laughter there will be what shrieks of anger against the very notion? Why then should our Brahmin friends take umbrage at our refusal to admit them in our avowedly Non-Brahmin organization? Why, in the name of common sense, should the Brahmin press write column after column of leaders and leaderettes piteously pleading that the Brahmins

too should be taken into the N-B fold? Why should they condemn our refusal to listen to their advice? Did they really expect us to be deceived so easily?

But, whatever their notion, there has not been even one single Non-Brahmin hitherto who has expressed the slightest desire even in the most remote or indirect manner to be enrolled as a member of the aforesaid Mahasabha; and I am quite confident that there will not be any Non-Brahmin who will do so thereafter. However, the Brahmin in his wisdom has entreated us times without number to broaden the basis of our party as he has been good enough to put it sometimes so as to allow him to enter. Broadening the basis, indeed! If we listened to his appeals we would be so broadening it as to bury it deep enough in all conscience! Was Brahma talking arrant nonsense when these people issued from his mouth, I wonder? Some of their loose, irresponsible and senseless talk is inexplicable. And yet the self-same Brahmin talks big at times and pretends perfect *sang-froid* and nonchalance about our activities. Have they not beaten Buddhism in the past? Is the Non-Brahmin movement a greater enemy? No, they will beat it yet. Then, in all sober sense, why do they feel so much anxiety about it as to attack and abuse it in season and out of season? Are they not in their hearts' deepest depths afraid of it?

They are and know it. They know that now they are up against the greatest foe that has threatened their domination in the whole history of India. They know that for the first time in that history Non-Brahmins as such have risen against Brahmins as such. They know that their game is up at last. They know that a greater danger than Buddhism is confronting them today. Buddhism accommodated them. Buddhism perished. Non-Brahmanism refuses even to listen to the question of their accommodation. So Non-Brahmanism may succeed where Buddhism itself failed. Let, therefore, Non-Brahmanism is destroyed by hook or crook! That is the Brahmin's secret wish. That is the deepest desire. That is his prayer. That is why he is at present trying to worm himself into our favour and so wriggle into our ranks. And that is why we must keep him at a respectable (though not respectful) distance. Till Adharma is destroyed, till *Dharma, Sama Dharma*, the *Dharma* of Social Democracy is crowned with victory it is our duty to maintain our organization unimpaired, distinct and intact.

– *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

Notes to 3.3

1. Government Orders issued by the first Justice Party ministry and subsequently made operative by the Independent Ministry headed by Dr. P. Subbaroyan which regulated appointment to government services of the various communities on the basis of their percentage in the total population. Dr. Subbaroyan's Ministry was sympathetic to Non-brahmin concerns and as chief Minister of the Madras Province, Subbaroyan lent his support to and participated in the First Self-respect Conference held in Chinglepet in 1929.
2. The Brahmin Sammelan – Maha Sabha – held in 1927 at Thuvar near Tanjore, now Thanjavur, in Tamil Nadu unanimously opined that in the 'Kali Yuga', that is, in the present, there are only two Varnas –Brahmin and Sudra.

4 REVOLT AND THE MAKING OF ANTI-CASTE RADICALISM

What does the "Revolt" Revolt Against?

(By Pothi)

1. The Revolt revolts against the tyranny of authority in all the spheres of life.
2. It revolts against scriptural suppression of Reason and sacredotal exploitation of ignorance.
3. It revolts against the baseless assertion of superiority by birth or sex, by caste, creed or colour.
4. It revolts against the inferiority complex of the Non-Brahmin as much against the assumption of superiority of the Brahmin.
5. It revolts against the bended knee and the upraised hand.
6. It revolts against Imperialism, earthly as well as heavenly, human as well as divine, British as well as Brahmin's.
7. It revolts against both, Heaven and Hell, both God and Satan.
8. It revolts against the supercession of Man by God as well as by Machine.
9. It revolts against the exaltation of the duty to God above that to man.
10. It revolts against miracle mongering and Mantra-muttering.
11. It revolts against the doctrine of fatalism and the faith in praise and prayer.
12. It revolts against economic slavery and enthronement of Mammon.
13. It revolts against poor physique and worship of physical Force.
14. It revolts against the toleration of man's unchastity and intoleration of woman's.
15. It revolts against early marriage, enforced widowhood and seclusion

of woman behind the purdha.

16. It revolts against the worship of images and performance of ceremonial.

17. It revolts against the conception of divine creation and vicarious salvation.

18. It revolts against the hypocrisy of present-day religion and the immorality of conventional ethics.

19. It revolts against political corruption as well as against social injustice.

20. It revolts against the opposition of orthodoxy to the progress of man.

– *Revolt*, 13 February 1929

Lesson from Bengal

It is not every day that the cause of social progress and reform scores triumph. The temptation is naturally great for the progressive-minded to crow over a victory when it is achieved. Especially is this the case in India, where of all countries, the dogs (sic) of orthodoxy have uninterruptedly enjoyed for centuries past the supreme self-satisfaction of having been able successfully to frighten the intelligentsia and the masses alike off the path of reform and reconstruction of society. "All that is and has been is to the good; there can possibly be no change or readjustment that could be thought of or suggested in connection with a state of affairs, social and religious, which has had the sanction of Manu and the backing of the Acharyas". This has been the view of the orthodox element and it has to be confessed that till recently not many people had thought it worthwhile to contest its validity or expose its reactionary character.

Thanks, however to the new spirit of the times – a spirit that is as assertive of an awakened consciousness as it is impatient of the pretended sanctities of the teachings and preachings of a past that is dead – neither the classes nor the masses are in a mood any longer to put up with conditions and circumstances that are a perpetual affront to their sense of self-respect. A new understanding of the values of life, a genuine feeling of resentment against those who would have the

accident of birth accepted as the one and only criterion of personal worth, a sincere recognition of the fact that much of what passes for religion and piety is nothing short of gross and grotesque superstition foisted and feeding upon the ignorance and credulity of the unsophisticated – these are the outstanding features of the awakened popular mind of the present day.

Naturally there is an atmosphere of revolt all round – a revolt which has as many targets as there are evils and drawbacks to be rid of. It is this revolt that we saw manifesting itself in an impressive fashion at Vykom a few years ago when the oppressed and the depressed of Travancore took up a resolute stand and fought a battle royal for securing the right of entry into a temple road that had unjustly been closed against them (*E. V. Ramasami Periyar and his wife Nagamma played an important role in this struggle – editors*).

It is the same revolt that is responsible for the huge clamour at the present day on the part of the so-called depressed communities for the right of worship in public temples in the same manner as those supposedly superior to them in the social scale are in unrestricted enjoyment of. To men of vision and commonsense it ought to be as clear as anything could be that "fights" of this kind are bound to increase in our midst as days go by. And not only that, they are bound to be crowned with success as well.

In the first place, it is preposterous to contend that, if temples are of any use at all, they are so only to a section of the Hindus and not to the whole community; secondly it is absolutely futile to set up the hue and cry that inequalities and iniquities should be permitted unquestioned sway in an era when the whole of the enlightened world is ringing with the cry of Liberty and Equality.

It may be that for some time more the priests and purohits would be able to make use of rulers and princes – as in the State of Travancore – to pull their chestnuts out of the fire, but the wretched tragedy cannot last long; the curtain will have to be rung down, and we are sure that the very audience who now so frantically applaud the actors will themselves be forced by sheer pressure of circumstances to abate their unholy glee and plead for the closing of the disgusting show. In other words, just as at Vykom, the forces of reaction will everywhere have to give way to the compelling impulses of a society bent on progress and on the annihilation of all that makes for its decay and disintegration.

The lesson is brought home to us anew by the recent occurrences at the Kapilamuni Kali temple in Bengal. Though the obscurantists there, had the secret support of the powers that be, they could not for all their efforts resist the tide of reform. They had eventually to surrender to the righteous cause of those intrepid souls who fought for the opening of the temple to all classes of the people, high and low, exalted and depressed. We confess, however, that we are not enamoured of the moral that orthodoxy would have the country draw from incidents of the type that occurred in Bengal. In fact, it is dangerous to instill the idea that reform could be brought about only by the exhibition of force majeure.

How we wish that, instead of provoking satyagrahas and passive resistance campaigns, the people in charge of all the Hindu Temples all over the country would gracefully realize betimes the imperative need for allowing access to them to all classes and communities in the land. They will do well to remember the words of the poet "Freedom's battle once begun, though battled oft, is always won"; and so let them hasten to do the right thing by the country.

But it is their look out, and for our part we are not much concerned with what they do, for we are convinced that, whether they will or not the stage is long past when they could have things all their own way. The people who secured the triumph in the temple entry fight in Bengal, belong to a generation that knows not Manu or Sankaracharya; and to them belongs the India of tomorrow. And that is sufficient for one and all of us to keep our faith alive and undimmed in the future of our society and our country.

- *Revolt*, 21 July 1929

A Religious Rally

'The King's Rally' a Catholic monthly journal published from Trichinopoly devotes the editorial columns of its October issue to the launching of an attack upon *The Revolt* specifically and upon the Self-respect and the Nationalist movements generally. The feelings of our pious contemporary are ruffled at the thought of the young Catholics whom *The Revolt* may lead away from the 'true fold' and it has girded up its loins to wage a crusade against the Self-respect movement.

This worthy Catholic has a sneaking admiration for us for he says: "Nevertheless the Self-respect movement is not without attractiveness.

Its leaders are undoubtedly earnest; they are deeply impressed with the flaws, failings and injustices of a social system which in spite of its hoary age does not fit with modern needs, clashes with modern ideas and is in perpetual conflict with the spread of education". It says further on "when the *Revolt* pleads that in India the cult of Varnashrama has been preached as a religion we have no quarrel with him". In other words our contemporary would not object to but would encourage a campaign of rationalism against the Hindu religion. But what it cannot tolerate is the prospect of the advent of reason within the fold of Catholicism.

It is characteristic of the advocates of all religions that they support rationalism and free thought so long as the latter attack any other religion except their own. Recent events in South India since the advent of the Self-respect movement bear ample testimony to our statement. Our first shafts were aimed not against Hinduism generally but against that aspect of Hinduism which passes under the name of Vaishnavism. The Saivites, the natural and age long antagonists of the Vaishnavites sided with us and lent support to our arguments. When, however we turned the search light of reason towards the dogmas held sacred by the Saivites, up rose the pundits of Saivism and every Siddhanta Sabha shrieked at us. The Mussulmans gloated over our victory over Hindu orthodoxy but when we directed our attack against the mad Mulla, a holy war was declared to exterminate the *Kaffirs*. Had we contented ourselves with fighting the Protestants, we could have counted on the supports of the forces under the *King's Rally*. But since we dared to question the 'true truth' embodied in the 'Unique Religion' we should meekly submit to the fusillade of the militant 'Rally'. In the heat of the fight our contemporary forgets old animosities and calls on the other religions for support. The Catholic would shield Hinduism in the hope that the compliment would be returned when the necessity arises. And what is remarkable in a pious Christian, the *King's Rally* attempts a defense of the caste system.

The argument in the following words of the 'Rally' would do credit to the most hardened Sastra: "whatever be the deficiencies of the caste system, it is a social system and one which has endured for centuries at that. A social system gradually builds up the mutual relations of the members composing it, and trains every one of them to exist as parts of an organism. From these mutual relations of the members the society derives its unity, its stability, its strength …. The strength and stability of

a social organism lies primarily in the safeguard of the principle of authority within it. No well ordered society is possible where authority is tampered with and it follows from this that where reform is required it is to be effected by those who are in authority, not by those who are under it".

This is the stock argument for the perpetuation of every tyranny that ever existed in the face of the earth. Every iniquity perpetrated upon a people works its way into the 'social system' and creates 'mutual relations' between the members. And these 'mutual relations' give 'authority' to some of the members to exercise their sway over others. The iniquity cannot be removed unless the 'principle of authority' which embodies it in society, is 'tampered with'. The most reactionary advocate of the caste system never put his case higher than what our contemporary argues for. The Catholic reasoning leads to the conclusion that no reform of the caste ought to be attempted which is not 'effected by those in authority' viz the priests and the Brahmins. The oppressed communities, therefore and the young 'who are under' authority, go to the wall. This is indeed reactionarism with a vengeance. We do not think Catholic Christianity is guilty of such outrageous advocacy as the *'Rally'* adopts. We are conscious of the beneficent influence that the Catholic missionary has exercised over South Indian life especially in the Colleges and Schools where he has educated our young and in the *cherries* where he has succoured our depressed. The success of the Catholic missionary is measured not by the number of converts he has brought in to his particular dogma but by the courage which the young men educated by him have shown in breaking away from the evil practices strongly entrenched behind the stone walls of tradition and by the ability which the depressed classes have exhibited to revolt against those placed in authority over them.

Had the Catholic started his work in India with the policy advocated by the '*Rally*' he should not have built a single College or a single Industrial School. Why then is the Catholic who has helped to break Hindu tradition and Hindu authority now so repentant and so anxious to actively render support to Hinduism? Because in the Self-respect League and in the movement of Rationalism, the Catholic scents a common enemy whose deadly attacks are directed not against this or that Non-Catholic religion but against all religions including the 'Unique Religion' of Catholicism. The Catholic who while among religionists, has scrambled for recognition of his own superiority over

all the others, has, when faced by the rationalist, but a helping hand to his erstwhile opponents. A religious rally is sounded to defend the citadel of religious dogmas against the onrush of the rationalist attack. How, when left to themselves, the religionists scramble for supremacy is well illustrated in the columns of even that very issue of the *'King's Rally'* which is devoted to attack us.

In the course of an article on 'Science and Miracles' says our contemporary: "The early history (of the Christian church) did not agree at all with that of the man made religions such as Mohammedanism, Buddhism or Confucianism. Mohammedanism was propagated lately by the sword wielded for it; but Christianity, in spite of the sword wielded against it". Rationalism might not have accomplished much but there is no doubt whatever that it has united the warring religions whether man made or God made, whether propagated by the Sword or inspite of the Sword and has forced them all to enter the same camp and fight under a common banner. 'Religion in danger' is a war cry that unites age long animosities. Our Catholic contemporary naively remarks "social reformers cannot inculcate too strongly the fundamental sense of religion which recognizes and proclaims the existence of a personal God entitled to our obedience". Hence pagan superstition is to be preferred to rationalist skepticism. That is the herd instinct of the religionist.

We have recently had a manifestation of this religionist instinct in the opposition organized against Mr. Sarda's Bill to prevent child marriage. If every man hated another, the Hindu pandit hated the Mussalman Mulla. But Mr. Sarda's bill offended against both the religions and excited the dormant herd instinct in both with the result that we are now witnesses to an open fraternization between the Mulla and Pandit. Our contemporary of Trichinopoly is just now blinded by the rousing of a similar instinct. We expect that in its sober moments the worthy Christian will recant and withdraw the support he has given to the caste system and other evils of Hinduism by his specious reasoning.

- *Revolt*, 20 October 1929

Revolt and Progress

(By Srimati G.Sumati Bai, B.A., L.T.)

Revolt leads to Progress and revolution heads reformation. Renaissance and reformation but follow in the wake of revolution, the sign of awakened life. To this history bears ample testimony. The revolt of the Plebeians in ancient Rome led to the representative rule of the Consulate there. The French revolution scattered abroad the seeds of democracy laying thus the axe at the very root of autocratic tyranny. The revolt of the American Colonies ended in the establishment of a Free United States. The progressive changes today in China, Russia and several other countries are again the fruits of revolt. Every great soul, besides whom the world reveres today and whose stamp in life even time cannot efface, had been a rebel in his times. Christ was one, Muhammad was another. The former for his revolt was nailed to the cross and the latter was stoned to flee for his life but their torch of light is still burning with standing the storm of centuries.

Here in India as far back as two thousand years, he whom we call 'The Enlightened' today was a rebel of his day. His Buddhism was primarily a campaign of revolt against priest-craft, caste, tyranny and mass ignorance. His creed of Ahimsa and Nirvana was a reformation that was a reaction against the religio-social evils of his times. The birth of the Sikh religion in the 15th century was again a rebellion led by Baba Nanak against "the priesthood and caste exclusiveness of Hinduism." In all fields – be it religion, philosophy, art or science – Rebels have been the pioneers of all Progress. The progress of science itself today is pre-eminently a revolt against ignorance, blind-beliefs and superstitions. To cite the opinion of Prof. Radhakrishnan, "changes in the moral codes are generally brought about by a few individuals who throw aside their prejudices and get at the reality which is much bigger and finer than our conventions make us believe. Every moral reformer is an immoral force in the eyes of the conservative who prefers the comfortable cloth of conventional morality to the "alarming activity of reflective intelligence… All progress is due to the rebels".

The seething spirit or revolt in our country today is a healthy sign of the inner soul of India being stirred to virile thought and action. In the name of religion the nation has long been supine. It has for ages now but trodden the beaten track, never swerving a bit to strike out a

new avenue of quicker evolution. Self-complacence in the name of religion and morality has blocked its way to progress. The woeful result has been that the nation has lost the capacity to adjust itself to changing times and environments. It has lagged behind the other nations which call it "backward". It has gradually succumbed to sloth and slumber forgetting its great heritage the thinking world waits to receive through its new life. India has for ages supinely suffered many a tyranny, plague and pestilence and called it the "Hand of Fate". Religion has dubbed some of her children as 'untouchables' and society has thought it its dharma to tyrannise them as worse than animals. Women are 'predestined unfortunates' and should only be treated as chattels and domestic servants. The priests are the chosen of God and they shall grow fat at the expense of the masses! About 92% of the nation is illiterate and that is Divine Will. The nation ranks high among others for its heavy morality, extreme poverty and ignorance and that is preordained too! None of these shall be either questioned or resisted! It is adharmic to rebel against what fate has decreed! Into such morbid beliefs the people have been hypnotized by a priest-ridden and hyper-conventional society. The apt remedy for this is Revolt.

It is now fortunate that the seeds of revolt have sprouted here and there in our country. Creeds and conventions are now on the anvil of Reason. The passing of The Child Marriage Restraint Act for instance marks an epoch in this direction. It means the triumph of common-sense over blind-faith. It means the denial of final authority to the Srutis and Smritis and Shariyat and what not of the distant past ages and their subordination to the thought of man and the urge of contemporary life. It means science recovering its legitimate throne usurped by superstition and its selfish votaries. It means the unfurlment the banner of convictions on the ruins of time worn conventions. The sign of the times promises fair to establish once again the Kingdom of Reason guided by human experience. The pseudo-moral and pseudo-religious injunctions will not now take long to retire into the snug oblivion of ancient Olla-Podrida (*a Spanish stew made of vegetables and meat, whose name has become synonymous with something that is hotchpotch and hopelessly mixed – editors*) and let man and woman be free to *build* for themselves on the basis of clear thought and synthetic experience.

- *Revolt*,3 November 1929

The "Revolt" at its Work

(By Mr. S. S. Bharathi)

The Editor asked me to contribute an article to the special number of the "Revolt"; and I do it with pleasure and with pride as well. I deem it a real privilege to be given to contribute one's humble mite, however small it be, to a movement, whose ideal is national uplift and whose plan of work is centred in selfless social service; The *Revolt* raised its standard but a year ago; yet its strides have been so rapid and its campaign so successful that it has already struck a genuine terror in the hearts of all the diehard social obscurantists, and has roused their wonted reactionarism in its actively virulent and full measure. "Religion in danger" is now the wild war cry widely shouted by the fanatic mullas and panicky pandits alike in the land. The very heat and energy of the sallies of these apostolic repositories of hierarchic superstition affords in a way the measure to appraise the worth and value of the work done by the *Revolt* and its little protestant army in this land of lotus eaters.

I am not unaware of the wounds caused to some of our brethren in the ruthless campaign of the *Revolt;* but I know they are merely superficial scratches, or at worst only skin deep wounds, as compared with the deeper and graver cuts and stabs dealt freely and often fatally by the loyal knight-templars in their holy fights against their lay-fellows for their only fault of being endowed with less faith and less favoured with occultic faculties. The right of Reason is for its very existence always provoked and often inevitably entailed on it by the rigid reactionary forces of custom, convention and superstition; and its duration is strictly limited to the necessities of self-defense, while its intensity is even less than commensurate with the cruelty of the hostile attacks on it. Again Reason will only fight with harmless bludgeons of logic and arguments; it has no armouries of magazines or factories to indent on for machine guns, bombshells, and poison-gases so readily available to and so lavishly used by the knightly good templers of the ordained faiths and hoary creeds. The injuries inflicted by the soldiers of Reason are bound at worst to be slight, and they always heal up quickly whereas the wounds caused by the captains of creeds are often deep, and most mortally poisoned, Faith is proudly offensive, while Reason is, ever on the defensive. Faith is proud of its boundless resources, and so always seeks to strike down all these recalcitrants, while Reason by its

very nature must ever strive to conciliate and win over. Custom and creeds have their usurped thrones to preserve at any cost, while Reason has nothing to conceal; and being conscious of its birthright it has no motives of strife and so extends its realm by suasion.

Reason's right to light and guide mankind is so self-evident and indisputable that all creeds and faiths virtually concede it to more or less extent; and what is more significant, they even vie with one another in paying indirect homage to Reason by trying to bolster up and embellish their tottering edifices with the concrete bricks, unbreakable tiles and cementing plaster of Reason, whether of genuine brand or of counterfeit label. They are constrained not only to borrow the designs, but also to indent largely on the materials of Reason to build and repair their strongholds and citadels just to keep out the very Reason whose alliance they freely seek in their internecine and fratricidal warfare between themselves. Reason thus is indispensable for the very existence as well as for the extension of their mischievous empire. Reason on the other hand is self-centred and self-reliant. Faiths dish up and flavour their savoury pickles to tickle the diseased palate of their dyspeptic votaries. Reason's dieting is plain, wholesome and nutritious. Faith zealously guards against every approach of Reason. For, it naturally fears the advent of this legitimate owner to its realm, lest it should naturally come into its own and thereby end ever after the empire of the usurpers. Any of the least sign of loyalty to Reason is therefore shouted down as heresy, and every adherent of Reason is branded as a traitor to Religion by the mercenary votaries of the later. I say 'mercenary' advisedly; for genuine voluntary allies have no partisan axe to grind and so would not hastily take to abuse any in the rival camp. It is only the mercenaries that stand to lose by the adverse fortunes of the Empires and Tyrannies of faiths; and naturally they will be more zealous than even their principals to defend and preserve what really is their own interest whenever there is any risk of its extinction by the exposure of the usurpations and establishment of the rights of the real owner. In their selfish and therefore all the more acute anxiety, these votaries are not over-scrupulous in the weapons they chose to attack the adherents of Reason with, and they resort to all and sundry means with a view at least to discredit the rivals for the time being, though they could not defeat them totally or for all times.

Any weapon is good enough for the soldiers of Religion to beat the dogs of Reason with. Logic denies them countenance; and arguments

betray and fail them. To yield without a blow is not to be expected from any vested interests. To meet the disciplined phalanx of reason in the fair field is not profitable, and they know Reason is always a clean fighter. They therefore enter into solemn compact not to give battle in the open, but to keep to their trenches and send out poison gases, and to ambush and skirmish with the unwary stragglers from Reason's camp. Abuse, however vulgar, is yet a handy dart to throw at these dogs, as their loyalty to Reason deserves no better treatment. Reason's adherents are also freely abused with impunity, as they may not choose to retort with abuse in return. Although abuse is a game two can play at, soldiers of Reason would not stoop to because of their reasoned and conscious righteousness of their cause, and also because of their training to rely on the unfailing smithy of Reason ever ready to forge the cleanest arguments, not only to parry, but also to vanquish all and every attack of unreason and sham. Champions of Reason must thus be ever prepared to face and bear up the vilest of slanders without flinch and with patient forbearance, and to bear them down only with their irresistible arguments.

The *Revolt* by raising the standard of Reason has incurred, nay invited the rank displeasure of the votaries of all creeds; and it has no right to feel aggrieved at the onslaught of abuse and vilification lavished on its head. It has stood its ground manfully so far, and it deserves congratulations and the sympathy of all right minded people, religious and secular alike. The *Revolt* has had a good fight all rounds and it has bravely won its spurs in the very first year of its campaign. It is really no small achievement for the *Revolt*. Of course it has had some ugly tussles and unedifying tilts here and there, now and again. Such things are only inherent in and incidental to a guerilla-war, which it is constrained to wage with the entrenched legions of faiths and creeds, of the crusted customs and vested interests, now all in league to scare away this valiant and venturesome votary of Reason from this realm of hallowed custom and hollow creeds. There is also this thing to be said for the *Revolt* in this connection. It has bravely undertaken the Herculean task of clearing the Augean stables in our land, ever renowned as the abode not of God only, but of the 33 crores of godlings and their ungodly revels. It has unfurled its flag of reform to renovate the dying if not dead society in Tamilaham. It is neither easy nor always agreeable task to do so.

The *Revolt* found at the very first stage the need for carrying out thorough weeding operation, if the field were to be prepared to receive the

seeds of Reason. Removing the festering from the soil is often a very disagreeable work. A weeder cannot consistently with his errand show much sympathy or tenderness to the weeds. If out of any sickly sentiments he were over-sympathetic to the weeds, then he would be really cruel to the crops; for, the rank weeds would choke up and kill off the sprouting plants. He needs must be cruel to the weeds, if he would be kindly to the crops. His duty thus hardens him against the weeds, against which he cannot spare his hoe. The *Revolt* in hoeing the old rank weeds in the land has struck against and severed the roots of the unwanted weeds. It cannot but be ruthless in its cleaning operation. This preliminary work must be irksome to the weeder, and cruel to the weeds. The hoe naturally breaks the clods of earth that cover up the roots of weeds; and to this extent the operation may seem to hurt the goodly earth. But the real result, the calculated sequel is to rid the earth of the unwanted weeds, to open its veins and tissues to eradicate their roots, and to soften the soil for the reception and nursing up of the seedlings and the goodly crops.

The *Revolt* in this work must inevitably have struck against the crusted minds, but only to rid them of the morbid old unreasoning habits and hardened views, and to enable them better to receive the seedlings or Reason. Even the scoffers would come to bless the *Revolt,* when in due course they realize the healthy and wholesome results, of the installation of Reason and the rout of over-crusted creeds. The very earth which resisted the hoe of the weeder, would thereafter smile sweetly with fragrant flowers and yield a goodly crop in gratitude to the hoer for his pains. The *Revolt* need not therefore despair of sympathy and encouragement even at the hands of our orthodox brethren in Tamilaham. Let it forge ahead in its single minded pursuit of lofty ideal to dethrone superstition and to install Reason in power in Tamilaham. Time is bound to come, nay the dawn is already breafling (sic) out in the eastern horizon for the *Revolt* and its collaborators and coadjutors, who would all receive ere long their due recognition and meed of honour. On behalf of all the lovers of truth, and as a Tamilian, I wish the *Revolt* goodspeed, and sing Pallandu and Hallelujas with all my heart. I am sure all stout hearted Tamils would cry amen to this wish.

- *Revolt*, 17 November 1929

Ourselves

Not out of any journalistic tradition or egoistic practice do we write on 'Ourselves', on this day of the dawn of the second year for the *Revolt*. Our intention is to attempt a sort of self-introspection which is possible only in calm moments of one's life, which occurs but very rare in an era like this when human energies are spent in the attempts to conquer space and time. We said 'calm' not without purpose. We are indeed sailing in a calm atmosphere, having spent ourselves in a year of terrific storm coupled with surging billows. But whoever knows our 'calm' is not one before storm?

It was on the 7th day November 1928 that memorable day in the history of the nations, the day of the anniversary of the immortal Revolution in Russia, the day which is looked upon as the violent explosion of human liberty, the day which is memorialised by millions in Russia for the mighty mixing up of monarchs and the masses – it was on that day that the *revolt* saw the light of day at Erode. Even as we pointed out at the outset, we 'unfurled the flag of *revolt* to destroy tyrannies and to befriend men and women'. Our aim, as we declared, was to put before our people, and humanity in general, how 'social injustice is at the root of our economic bondage and political subjugation'. Our work in this direction, has therefore been, merely educative. But we have been, not once or twice, branded as 'destructive'. "True education" as a writer once remarked, "is more destructive in character, than constructive". For, mankind has to unlearn many things at its various stages of life. The Self-respect movement of which the *Revolt* claims to be a loud-speaking organ, has taught in a period of half a dozen summers, what mankind should unlearn before storing up new stock. In 'ringing out the old, and ringing in the new' ideas, the *Revolt* has carried its banner amongst many odds.

Our country is so saturated with time honored customs and institutions, not to speak of their protagonists and upholders that the difficulties on the way of a work like ours, can be more imagined, than described. In proclaiming the aims of the Self-respect movements to places where we could not be heard through our Tamil journal, 'Kudi Arasu' which in spite of its largest and really enviable circulation throughout the Tamil-knowing places in and outside India, is not able to command a sufficiently wide hearing, we have carried our mission successfully through *Revolt*. The limitations to our task are too well-known to our

readers to need any enumeration here. In the first place, ours has come to be, by the natural course of circumstances, perhaps the first journal in India to wed itself to a deliberate advocacy of rationalism. Though the *Revolt* was chiefly intended for the task of social reconstruction on a basis of equality and justice, we have come to the painful but inevitable conclusion that the task of thoroughly revolutionizing an age-long system in a country of antiquated culture and habits, cannot be done effectively without taking a rationalistic view of life.

This is no smooth sailing in our country. At the first stage of the *Revolt*, we brought down upon ourselves the fury of the Brahmins, the monopolists of the country, who hated us for our disagreeable task of exposing them to the masses. Then came the saivites, who though a microscopic community in India, are not a wit worse than the Brahmins in the cruel suppression of the thousand communities below them. Their wrath has almost reached a stage, when it can be safely said, they have exhausted themselves completely. The third stage of *Revolt*, which was not long after its birth, was reached when the Muslims and Christians, hurled their attacks upon us for our anti-religious policy. The final stage has been reached even many months back when the protectors of God took cudgels against us for our repudiation of the necessity for a god. This shall give a fairly good idea of the route which our ship has taken. In fair weather and foul, we have steered ourselves with the help or our readers, who have ever since been a dutiful and helpful crew. Storms assailed us at times and waves threatened us by turn. Knowing as we do, the initial difficulties on our way, thanks to our learned contributors who have done a voluntary service to humanity, we feel stronger and stronger in the advocacy of a bold view of rationalism, and have never felt the mood of depression or discouragement.

On the other hand, it may be said to the credit of the progressive section of humanity, world currents are taking us farther and farther in our works so as to enable us to have a quick and an easy sail. Apart from the speedy progress outside India made by Russia and Turkey, which in its turn has startled up from their slumber many thinking men and women in other countries also, in our own country, events, like the courageous attacks on Mullaism by the Muslims of Bengal, the dramatic casting (sic) of the Purdah by the Nambudri ladies of Malabar; the surging waves of the depressed communities attempting to roll heavily into the temples and other public places in order to

secure equal rights, and last but not least the Acts that have been passed in the sphere of social reform, and the Bills that are yet on the anvil of legislature – these and innumerable events of a like nature have emboldened us to lift up our banner of *Revolt* higher and higher and march with the army of Freethinkers and Truthseekers in our onward march. Again we repeat our watchword, 'we will not compromise; we will be heard'.

- *Revolt*, 17 November 1929

The Movement as I see It

By K. C. Raman, B.A. (Hons) (1)

I am informed that "*the Revolt*", the effective mouth-piece of the Self-respect Movement, would be shortly completing the first year of its life, and I am asked to contribute an article for its annual issue. There can be no better way of complying with this request than to attempt an appreciative criticism of what the journal has already achieved and what it has to do hereafter. It is needless to say that the promoters of the organ, and of the movement which is behind it, deserve the hearty congratulations of every lover of humanity. Theirs is a mission which aims at nothing short of liberation of mankind from the pitiable state of ignorance into which it has fallen. To purge humanity of its worn-out traditions and to maintain the dignity and equality of man by pushing forward such a movement, are as commendable as they are difficult. The desirability of bestowing choice encomiums on the happy few who have wedded themselves to such a talk, will be quite obvious to all who are rightly informed as to the best methods of social reform, and the manifold difficulties they have to face, are bound to manifest themselves however sincere and humanitarian their motives may be – in the form of oppositions from all the interested parties. Hence it is that "*the Revolt*" has given so much room for exultation and unrest in different quarters.

The founder of the Self-respect Movement is not without great forerunners in the history of human race. It has been the common experience of all the saviours of the masses that the benevolent intentions and the sympathetic designs of theirs have been tentatively thwarted at the very outset. As in the past, in the present also, when such a master unfurls the banner of revolt, the broad human sympathy and the clearly perceivable sincerity underlying his destructive criticism

of destructive social tendencies, do not always stand him in good stead. Still, all these humanitarians, backed up by the moral strength of their sincere endeavours, are bound to triumph in the long run in their praiseworthy mission of succouring humanity in its onwards march.

For the earliest and perhaps the best example of such, it is enough for us to peep into the early history of our own country. Which religious philosophers and sane critic has failed to appreciate and refused to commend the self-respect ideals preached by Lord Buddha? If any Indian who takes pride in being born in the same soil as the Sakyamuni, questions the healthy nature of Mr. E. V. Ramasami's propaganda, is he not either a hypocrite or an inconsistent human being? Enough has been said by religious enthusiasts in praise of Buddha and more than enough about the salient features of his mission. But the masses in India have not fared any the better for all that they are still whirling in a whirlpool, a whirlpool full of endless confusions and innumerable gods. To avoid such a chaotic state of affairs, Lord Buddha's advice was simple and direct – to understand correctly the dignity and responsibility of man and to give up theological speculations. This valuable advice has been discarded as a thing of naught and hence our present woe.

It has been said, and rightly too, that Buddha was in advance of the times. The then state of civilization with no secular education and public consciousness was partly responsible for the failure of Buddhism in India. This, however, is not so lamentable a fact as the destructive work of Hindu priests who spared no pains in putting the chaotic religion of old on its former pedestal. The Indian people have not ever after this mesmeric influence of Hinduism, woke up from their age-long slumber. To enter into a crusade against all established religions which stunt the growth of man is a task worthy of a great hero and we are fortunate to have an able master for this in the person of Mr. E. V. Ramasami.

To shoulder such a heavy responsibility means to fight against caste and priest. It is a notorious fact that caste system which has set man against man and paralysed the natural impulses of millions, is a peculiar institution found only in India. It is now more than evident to all thinkers that the salvation of Mother India lies in the removal of this inhuman institution, root and branch, from our social organism, and that the arguments in favour of preserving it intact only reveal the anxiety

of the guardians of the heavenly gate, who owe their superiority to it. Mass education and foreign influences would go a long way in facilitating a reformation with beneficent and far-reaching results, provided educative propaganda on vigorous lines such as chalked out by "*the Revolt"* during the past one year is continued for a few decades. It is highly gratifying to note that the talented editor of the journal has not spared any topic or any person, whenever these demanded his criticism. His fearless courage, robust optimism, immense working capacity and remarkable originality are full of promises. May he live long to see his mission fulfilled – to do for the Indian masses what Abraham Lincoln did for the American Negroes and what Tolstoy did for the Russian peasants!

- *Revolt*, 17 November 1929

Notes to 4

1. K.C. Raman was a leading member of SNDP Yogam and Sahodara Sangam, an anti-caste organization founded by K. Ayyappan of Kerala.

Part II

Opposing Varnadharma

The Non-brahmin-Self-respect movement's tireless opposition to the caste order and varnadharma is legion. Its radicalism is not without its debts, though and the pages of *Revolt* demonstrate its making. Periyar Ramasami was resolutely opposed to varnadharma and even while a member of the Indian National Congress spoke out against discrimination and the role played by faith and belief in obscuring and worse legitimizing it. When he dissociated himself from Congress, and began the Self-respect movement, he displayed a rare anger and courage in taking on what he habitually termed 'political brahminism', and which eventually came to be opposed by several in the Non-brahmin-Self-respect movement (See *Nationalism and Anti-caste Radicalism)*.

Periyar's younger comrades many of whom wrote in *Revolt* address the conundrum of varnadharma from several different points of view, all of which were present in the movement's Tamil journals as well. Yet *Revolt* is somewhat different in that it addressed larger ideological questions consistently as much as it did the activities of the Self-respect movement.

As the articles in the first section of this part of the book make evident, resistance to varnadharma took several forms. Untouchability, as experience, precept and practice were obviously very important matters of concern and the articles grouped under this head indicate both social empathy and anger. The caste Hindu was equally a matter of concern for the self-respecters, and in that age of caste mobilization the anti-caste radical could not obviously ignore the issues being raised by caste groups; besides, these groups did serve as forums for remonstrating against caste as well. The section on the Caste Hindu captures this productive paradox.

Our second section comprises articles on anti-caste radicalism in the rest of the sub-continent and allows us a fascinating glimpse into the making of a fraternity of minds and people across linguistic lines. These articles also indicate that anti-caste radicalism was widely prevalent, and in and across other political and social forums. The articles on the

SNDP Yogam are rich in detail and point to a constellation of events that brought together anti-caste radicals in the Tamil and Malayalam-speaking regions of the South: the temple entry debates, the child marriage legislation and the ill-timed visit of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to the Southern Provinces where his views were continuously challenged. This coming together, it must be emphasized, was as much on account of a shared radicalism with respect to gender concerns. The essays devoted to Dr Ambedkar and the Samata movement in the Bombay province are particularly interesting, addressing, as many of them do, the Parvati temple satyagraha.

It is interesting that *Revolt* featured articles on the activities of the Jat Pat Torak Mandal, the anti-caste movement founded by the Arya Samaj. Though aware of the peculiar twist given by Arya Samaj ideologues to the question of social change in Hindu society, which was almost always discussed in the context of the social degeneration brought about by Islam, self-respecters were admiring of the arguments against varnadharma, proposed by the Mandal and the Samaj. They were wary of the Arya Samaj's shuddhi and sangathan activities, yet did not baulk from considering seriously the Samajists' opposition to caste hierarchy.

As much given to satire as critique, *Revolt* carried regular articles, mock-conversations and features on faith, unreason, superstition and custom, all of which called attention to the pretensions of a brahmin priesthood and the inanities of belief. Importantly, these criticisms were informed by a sense of what was often lost and elided in social practice – especially the value and worth of labour that fed a parasitic intellectual class. They also indicate how in a routine sense our common humanity is compromised by custom, ritual and everyday unkindness. Witty and tongue-in-cheek, these instances of anti-clerical atheism in the service of opposing the Brahmin and his creed –our third section – offer a study in persuasive reason and are akin to some of Dr Ambedkar's arguments, on graded inequality and his views on the theory of karma.

The fourth section is devoted to Brahminism, to what the self-respecters opposed chiefly and contains several short pieces on the privileges granted Brahmins in the Travancore state, which unlike Baroda and Kolhapur did not always have enlightened rulers who took the part of 'shudras' and 'panchamas'. Appended to this section is also a remarkable set of articles on the subject of temple entry, much discussed during this time. These contain well-argued and ingenuous indictments of

privilege and caste.

The fifth section comprises a set of articles on Tamil Saivism, whose character and ideals were subject to rigorous critique by the Self-respecters, both on grounds of doctrine and justice. Self-respecters objected to Tamil Saivites, all of whom were Non-brahmins, sporting Brahminical habits and adopting Brahminic scriptural ideals as their own. They argued that Tamil Saivism, whatever it may have been in history, had since become a pale replica of Brahminism, of the sort preached by Adi Shankara. If Saivites desired to claim a spiritual identity for themselves, they needed to re-think their beliefs and adopt a new philosophy, based on self-respect, equality and unqualified fraternity. The articles in this section feature crucial aspects of this debate that brought together issues of caste, faith, culture and history.

Our last section is on varnadharma and opposition to it, both as principle and practice and comprises witty as well as resonant diatribes against either.

1 'UNTOUCHABLES' AND CASTE HINDUS

1.1 The Crime of Untouchability

The Curse of Hinduism

We reproduce elsewhere in this issue one of the reports of the Adi Dravidas of Tamil Nadu before the Simon Commission. The grievances of the community are represented in a clear manner and the report gives a good idea of the inhuman treatment accorded to them on the caste Hindus. The position of depressed classes in Hindu society is nothing but a sugar-coated slavery. Hinduism boasts of its antiquity or its subtle philosophy but the curse of untouchability is enough to hasten its well-deserved ruin. The report the Adi Dravidas brings painful thoughts to our mind and we hope to see them better in the immediate future. Meanwhile on behalf of the depressed communities, we bid a farewell, a long farewell to the present day Hinduism!

Adi Dravidas before the Simon Commission

To

The Right Hon. Sir John Simon, M.P. Chairman, Royal Commission, India.

Sir,

We the Adi-Dravidas of Tamil Nadu (South India) presently residing in British Malaya offer you heartfelt welcome on your second tour in India.

We fear that our position in India which has received the most sympathetic attention of His Majesty's Government and the world at large for so many ages, will be at stake, therefore we take this opportunity of laying our grievances before you.

We believe "Caste" was brought about on the lines on which the "trade unions" in Great Britain were contemplated. The people were divided into various castes, each caste having to carry on a particular trade and the social rank or status of each caste was recognized in the order of the nature of the trade. Each caste was controlled by a "Panchayat",

whose decisions on all matters relating to caste was final. Agriculture which was, and is the chief, if not the only industry in the Tamil Nadu, has played an outstanding part in building up this "caste monument".

We Adi Dravidas were excluded from "Caste" or in other words we were the "Out-caste". Our routine was (a) to serve as slaves all our lives, our women to toil in the fields, procure manure and do all menial work and our children to herd cattle, (b) to serve as "thoties" (*literally, 'scavengers' – editors*) to go about heralding the orders issued by the headman with tumtum (*tomtom – editors*), (c) to bury all dead creatures, (d) to serve the "Caste" with drums, tum tums, bugles, banners, light etc. at funeral, marriages, shows, festivals processions ceremonies, etc… e) to serve as "undertakers" to bury and burn dead bodies and (f) to serve as "messengers". It some times takes days and nights in the unbearable heat, darkness and rain to reach the destinations and the risks of encountering with robbers, devils, beasts and snakes are terrible, on every such occasions everyone from the "Paracherry" (*a 'paraiah' settlement – editors*) must serve, if there is no male, the female or the boy should serve even at the cost of starvation.

We beg to point out that apart from this, according to the acts of caste we are looked down as "untouchables" and are forbidden to wear clothes below our knees, wear personal decorations such as decent clothes, jewellery, shoes, etc. to carry on any profitable business to build decent houses to have any access to the caste or their belonging and we are not allowed admission to public officers, business places, temples, kacherries (*courts – editors*), schools and wells;

We beg to point out that the only remunerations which are allowed us are, free concessions of all dead animals such as cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, etc. flesh to be consumed and skins to be made into drums, tum tums, etc., grant of "Swantharams" (*right to a share of the harvest – editors)* on the returns of periodical harvests, the so-called "Kaani Karai" (*right to the use of village commons – editors)* and to drink and feast on the animals which are massacred periodically as homage to the gods, idols and spirits.

We beg to point out that if there is any "contravention of these acts" the punishments are heavy fines, severe thrashing with sticks (sometimes tied to trees) outcasting from fellow Adi Dravidas and expulsion from the village. If the offender is unable to pay the penalties whatever properties he has are auctioned to raise the amount. The headman or

"munisif" who is the highest authority in the village is the greatest obstacle to our progress. Our grievances are never attended to and appeals to higher authorities for redress are made impossible by all sorts of obstacles being placed in the way and if at all we have the good fortune to do so, the administrators of British laws and justice are the high caste also.

We beg to point out that even the intervention of the most glorious British jurisdiction, the noble work of the Great Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest reformer of India and the devoted labours of our leader on the Legislative council, The Hon. Rao Bahadur M. C. Raja, who as "Rajah" of the depressed classes of India has worked all his life for the upliftment of his fellow brethren have, we regret we are compelled to say, borne little fruits, particularly as regards caste. If whatever little advancement has been made it is only as far as the great cities are concerned, the conditions in the village are just the same. In order to establish the fundamental truth we must humbly request you to visit the Southernmost Districts of the Zamindars and Rajahs (particularly the Ramnad from which most of us emanate).

We beg to say that compelled by such most inhuman sufferings, dire poverty and trying circumstances, Adi Dravidas are forced to seek consolation by joining other religions such as Christianity and Mohamadanism and by immigrating to other parts of the British Empire, such as Africa, Burma, Ceylon and Malaya. Immigration, particularly has proved a blessing in disguise. As soon as they set their feet on these lands they are freed from the terrible fetters and burden of caste, and they love the lands of their adoption so much that most of them settle in these lands for good.

We Adi Dravidas in Malaya for example are free. Malaya is the most cosmopolitan country in the world and there is no caste there. Caste prejudices begin to die away at the Quarantine Camps. British Justice and British sense of equality of treatment for all predominates. Most of the Adi Dravidas hold high and responsible posts in the Government and others are to be found in every walk of life and responsibility. High caste and low caste live together and carry on their trades in perfect peace and harmony. The other nationalities like the Chinese, Malayas, Japanese, etc., regard us as one community. Even our brethren from Jaffna (North Ceylon) are casting aside their differences and we go under the general term of Tamils.

We beg to say that in spite of the peace and prosperity which people in these lands enjoy, the Government of India sends agents all the way from India to look after the welfare of its people in these lands. We beg to point out that according to the laws of Nature any "acts" which makes the rights of others less secure, amounts to murder. That such murders are committed on us in India is a well known fact. We beg to say that the Government of India will be doing righteousness to humanity in general and Adi Dravidas in particular if it takes to heart seriously the well being of the poor, illiterate and downtrodden and devise means to eliminate these murders and thereby free the most pathetic people in the world.

We beg to point out that we welcome any form of "Swaraj" as along as it will work out our salvation. As a step towards this and as a constitutional right, we would demand the establishment of a special Department with special staff for the administration of ameliorative measures for the Adi-Dravidas, viz;

1. To punish (a) the enforcement of slave duties; (b) pernicious distinction of "Soosthra" (untouchables): (c) restriction of legitimate rights; (d) human consumption of dead animals;
2. To abolish (a) caste panchayat; (b) toddy traffic; (c) monopoly of appointments of Munsifs, Police & all other Government servants by the high caste; (d) all books which are recognized as authorities on caste, such as "Manusmrithi", etc.
3. To grant free settlements for residential, agricultural, burial & other purpose.:
4. To provide free compulsory education for boys and girls.
5. To provide facilities for the appointments of Adi Dravidas to the Police, Postal, Civil and other administrative Departments:
6. To appoint representatives on (a) all public committees and boards such as Taluk, District and Provincial Boards; (b) Justices of the peace; (c) Juries;
7. To establish (a) Police station at each post office for the group of villages which are within its radius; (b) Co-operative and other Societies: (c) Munsif boards.

We in conclusion most conscientiously pray that in your deliberations to guide the future destiny of India, all these may triumph over the age long inhuman customs of this caste ridden land of India.

Kuala Lumpur, We beg to remain

Br. Malaya. Your Loyal servant.

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929

What about our Dyers?

The massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh brings back to our memory, the atrocities of General Dyer and the recent temple incident at Erode (*see below pp. 321-322 for details of the Erode temple entry struggles – editors*) brings painful recollections and sorrowful happening caused by the Dyers of our land. Dyerism is not the monopoly of any land or race. The fury of the nation was poured in torrents upon General Dyer, for "his criminal incapacity and heartlessness". And the country was ablaze. The incident was also carefully used as a political weapon to rouse the spirit of the masses. It was the burden of the national song for these years, till it was utilized for election purposes, and ultimately forgotten even by the originators of this furious spirit. Human memory, we know, is hopelessly forgetful. And the solitary Dyer passes away. Naturally, a thick cloud passes over the past.

As if to immoratalise a Western Dyer, we see every day, scores of Dyers in every hamlet of our "holy" land. Our Dyers are not transient, for they exist, as Carlyle says, for the "three *Nornas* or times". Dyerism is transplanted by Brahminism; and Jallianwallahs we are having very near to us. We do not blame, in this respect, any particular community in India, for when we refer to Dyer, we do not blame all the westerners. Just as we emphasise upon the spirit of Dyerism, so also we refer to the spirit of Brahminism only. Both are same to us, though the latter is more poisonous and more tyrannical. Thanks to our Dyers, they are maintaining living monuments of their nefarious actions, in the shapes of public roads, wells, tanks and temples. At Vykkom, the test was applied to the roads, and at Erode it is being applied to the temples.

It is not our purpose here, either to refer to the futility of the Devasthanam Committee's resolution, or to discuss about the points of the case. For we are aware, this problem cannot be solved by either of these. We are sure this will become in the near future, an all India question, when it will be a touchstone for nationalism, equality, social

reform etc. Our only desire is to point out in this short article, the difficulties of the social reformer in facing the problem of untouchability within the temples. Roads and other public resorts are an easy affair when compared with temples, for in the latter, the reformer has to fight with the religious scruples of the people. And all reformers generally, attempt to reform society without wounding the religious susceptibilities of the people.

This is just the reason why religious and social reform has been a thorough failure in our country. Swami Vivekananda and other great men of our land have tried their best to purify the Hindu community but all has been in vain. Mr. Gandhi for instance, has given his frank opinions on the curse of untouchability, and has done his utmost to remove the evil. The National Congress is passing pious resolutions at the end of every year. The Social Reform Conferences are passing more vigorous resolutions, condemning this inhuman institution. And what is the result? Dyerism is flourishing as before.

Those who are shedding crocodile tears for the depressed classes and those who are showing their lip sympathy should know that Dyerism cannot be ended unless we create in some place, another Jallianwallah. When one fifth of our own race is being treated as social lepers, we can't see the fun of mere resolutions and blood stirring speeches. Saivism, which is today perhaps, the most intolerant of the religions, has also recently passed a resolution for the admission of the depressed classes into the temples. And it is no exaggeration when we say that, it is *they* who refuse to admit the "untouchables" into their temples. Hinduism i.e. Brahminism is not so elastic, as to admit reforms. This statement can be corroborated by the failure of huge organizations and big personalities in their attempts at reform. Our religion cannot bend, we are sure, but it can only break. The tyranny of untouchability cannot be wiped off by resolutions or orations, but only by plucking at the roots of the ignominious trees of Brahminism. As long as the Varanashrama Dharma Conferences are allowed to continue, as long as the caste manufacturing temples are looked upon as sacred institutions, as long as the Agraharams (*exclusive brahmin neighbourhoods – editors*) – the Jallianwallahs of our land – are left to work their own evils, and as long as the Dyers of our country are allowed to preach their cursed religion, as long as these cancers of society are left to continue, there is no hope of raising our downtrodden millions from the abyss of degradation.

For our part, we opine that, first and foremost, the temples of our land – the caste manufacturing machinery – should be dealt with, root and branch. The streets of the Varanashramites (Dyers) should be attended to, not by means of orations, but in action. We remember Mr. Gandhi himself has observed once, "Nowhere is the untouchable so cruelly treated as in the Madras Presidency". Now then, there is ample work in our province for the so called nation builders and independentwallahs. And we are glad, Erode itself has lifted the banner for the great battle. The local temples are closed for the last one month, and the citizens of Erode including the depressed communities, have taken up the challenge of the Dyers. It matters very little whether the Devasthanam Committee accepts the resolution or not, whether the case is decided in favour or not; for we are sure the citizens of Erode have understood the real issue of the matter. And further, we are receiving everyday encouraging letters from individuals as well as big organizations, extending their wholehearted support to the temple entry movement in our town. In this connection, we regret our inability to publish all of them, due to the limited space at our disposal. We hope other provinces will also share the burden, and turn their attention towards this great attempt at extinguishing Dyerism from our land. Meanwhile, we shall await the opening of the temple doors and its consequences.

- *Revolt*, 1 May 1929

1.2 The Perils of Reform

What Substantial Work?

The Anti-Untouchability Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress has issued a message to the Associated Press, where it has very cleverly stated, that "in spite of the fact that a good deal of substantial work has been done during recent years, much remains yet to be done for the removal of the disabilities of the so called untouchables". We know the Indian National Congress, in its untiring work for these forty years and more, has done a *substantial* work in removing the untouchability, that the very pillars of the Congress Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Lala Lajapatrai have been refused admission in the temples of the South. As if they do not care the expulsion from the temples, both of them have treated the matter as a very insignificant one. There is no stop in the punishment in all the temple entry cases. And there is the Congress with its record of *substantial* work, to be written in golden letters in the pages of Indian History. The Sub-committee has now descended from the heavens with its "effective steps" and peaceful means. Both these phrases, we know, are as compatible with each other as the terms, "Complete Independence" and "Oath of Loyalty".

- *Revolt* , 5 June 1929

Broom and the Bucket?

(by Karamchand Mohana Balan)

The amelioration of the status of the so called untouchables is undoubtedly one of greatest, if not the greatest of the social problems of modern India. And it greatly redounds to the credit and honour of the Indians that this problem has been of late boldly tackled and perseverently solved by patriotic and earnest people one and all. The economic, social political and religious advancement of these helpless and 'suppressed' classes constitutes not the least important plank in the programmes of political organisations in our country worth the name. Not only must these hapless victims of our heinous social system helped out of the miserable slough into which they had been cast from time immemorial but also that golden slogan of the true democrat "equal opportunity for all" must be vigorously translated into practice by

throwing open to them all the avenues of prosperity in the land. In short these untouchables must not be either directly or indirectly confined exclusively to their time worn and traditional vocations of manual services but must be freely allowed and encouraged to get all the educational facilities such as are enjoyed today by their more fortunate brethren and thus enter into and cooperate for such posts and places in the administration of the country as they had been till now not even suffered to so much as dream of. This is the ardent wish of all real democrats and that state alone would be worth name of 'democracy' in which is possible such a treatment to these people.

But meanwhile, we have been favored with a masterly enunciation of a political philosophy by an individual who calls himself "P" in an article entitled "Pictures from Andhra" in the issue of July 4th of 'Young India'. This writer assigns quite a different kind of status and duty to the Panchamas in the glorious Government of Swaraj in which perhaps the new *Arthasastra* of the modern Kauthilya or the "Neethi" of this modern Manu would be the gospel. His article is worth being perused by every progressive minded Indian and earnest democrat.

Being consulted by a Panchama youth, whether or not he should follow the advice of a certain Panchama M.L.C. who advocates separation of their community from the Hindus, this eminent writer is said to have given him the following advice: "By all means follow their advice but do not trust anyone however big he may be if he is ashamed to handle the broom and the bucket side by side with you. A person who is ashamed of his forefathers cannot be expected to be faithful to his country or to his community". A noble and magnanimous advice indeed! How I wish that every patriotic son of Mother India patiently and fervently adhered to the traditional profession of his forefathers which was at first ordained by the illustrious predecessor of this eminent writer, that great Manu, the Law – giver of Ancient India. But alas! The impatient youth could not comprehend the soundness, the sincerity and the sublimity of such an earnest advice as this! His inborn selfishness and burning ambition and his irresistible and natural love for his community impelled him to question this august counsel of his, if he sought "to deny them all scope for development and expansion by tying them down to their manual work."

Far from it. Poor youth! How on earth could that be? Instantly shot forth this studied reply from the venerable follower of Gandhiji: "There

is no slur implied. It is only a question of reassessment of values. What I am telling you is not my advice but Gandhiji's than whom the Panchamas have got no truer friend. What he wants is not to put a check on your progress but rather to see you rise to the full height of your being. And this you can do not by looking down upon your profession which is one of the noblest but to realise its full responsibilities."

It will be patent to our readers beyond a shadow of doubt that the great principle underlying this noble advice is that pernicious Varnashrama dharma, to the perpetual and predominant reign of which is attributable all that is abominable and unjust amidst us, and sure and inevitable decay of which has already begun to liberate millions of people from and inextricable and eternal bondage and fetter.

Before enquiring into the views of Mahatma Gandhi on the main question of the separation of the Panchamas from the Hindus, let us examine a little the superb words of wisdom that dropped from the lips of "P". What are the words? "Rise to the full heights of your beings" Yes, And how? Why – by the unquestioning adoption of that "noblest of professions" of handling "the buckets and the broom"! Oh! Ye, the miserable mortals of this mundane world, who fervently hunt after the lurid positions and lucrative posts in the State in the vain and futile expectation of reaching "the full heights of your beings" – stand a while and seriously take this advice to your hearts ! Better leave all those posts to self-sacrificing and selfless men of "P"s ilk and immediately take to the sublimating profession of the 'bucket and the broom'. Here is the easy and "primrose path to the eternal bonfire" – to immortality and salvation.

The absurdity of such an advice lies on its very surface. If this advice does not seek to preach that fatal "Dharma" of Varnashrama, though in a rather veiled way, pray then what is it? Does this principle which "cribbs, cabins and confines" a certain class of people eternally to their fathers' profession, accord with the practice obtaining in the model democracies of the modern countries in the West? If a man were to be confined to the bucket and the broom not because he has got a particular liking for it, not because it is of his own choosing, but simply because his forefathers had happened to be following it, how on earth can he rise to the full height of his being, passes one's comprehension. Is this giving him full opportunity? One has only to contrast this state of affairs

with that in the West to be struck with the utterly shameful position of Mr. "P". The late revered G.K. Gokhale in one of his lectures, while dwelling on this point *i.e.* the denial of opportunities to the untouchables, most picturesquely contrasts the state of affairs obtaining in England and in India respectively. He cites the case of Joseph Chamberlain, the great statesman of the last century and the worthy father of Sir Austin, who had been at first a shoe-maker and then a screw maker but who afterwards attained to the highest of honour in Great Britain and then indignantly asks, "Will a shoe-maker ever be able to rise in India in the social scale in a similar fashion, no matter how gifted by nature he might be?" President Hoover, Mr. Baldwin, and also the present Labour Premier Mr. Ramsay Macdonald are only a few amongst a thousand of such men as have from the lowest rungs of the ladder of society managed to climb to and fitly occupy the highest places in their countries – all due to the really democratic nature of their governments. But is such a possibility even conceivable in Mr. 'P's Swaraj? And yet our future Swaraj will be a full fledged democracy!

The Nehru Report, however, which is the handwork of true and broad minded patriots differs from such 'reactionary extremists' like our 'P' for its sincerity is evidenced by its unmistakable advocacy of adult suffrage and its clear emphasis on the principle of equal opportunities to all without the distinction of caste, colour or creed.

Now to come to the views of Gandhiji himself on the Panchamas and their profession: It is quite clear that he and his words and more so his acts do not in the least lend their authority to the views of "P", who curiously enough poses himself as the accredited exponent of the farmer's principles! Elsewhere says Gandhiji most fervently: "Would that god give us the strength and the wisdom to become voluntary scavengers of the nation as the 'suppressed classes' are forced to be". It may be true that Gandhiji himself considers their profession as 'the noblest'. Hence it was perhaps that he lately in the course of a lecture exhorted the audience to follow his own example of cleansing his own latrine. Here again enters another difficulty. For 'P' complains later on in the same article "the anarchy of competitions pervades every sphere of society and hence are the panchamas kept out of their own". But now suppose that every one amongst us were to seriously decide to follow the example of Gandhiji from today onwards where, I ask, would be the born Panchamas? Poor Mr. P. has got no other reply than these contradictory and meaningless words: "In a well–ordered state, under

Swaraj of Gandhiji's dream, no one would encroach upon another's sphere of duties." I heartily wish it were possible !

Lastly, what is really the opinion of Gandhiji on the point over which the unfortunate youth sought the valuable advice of "P" and by way of reply to which he was favored and indulged with this soul killing answer? This question of the separation of the Panchamas from the Hindus is in fact neither new nor novel except that it provokes the ire of the venomous cobra of the Varnashramite, which starts and stings furiously and vomits its contagious poison. Above all, this suggestion seems to point to the only rational path open to the sixty-two millions of downtrodden souls. It appeals to any one with a heart to feel and a mind to think. And so has it, in fact appealed to Gandhiji himself, "than whom" in the words of our "P", "the Panchamas have no truer friend". For it is one of the three ways open to them according to Gandhiji himself. Says he, "therefore, by way of protest against Hinduism, Panchamas *can certainly* stop all contact and connection with the other Hindus so long as special grievances are maintained". "But", continues he and qualifies this statement by a proviso, "this means organized intelligent effort. And so far I can see there is no leader among the Panchamas who can lead them to victory through non-co-operation." But the latter part of the statement seems not to be borne by facts, for, we have since its writing seen too many battles fought and won by the Panchamas under the lead of mighty Marshals of impregnable strength to be yet laboring under the delusion that there is a dearth of leaders. If, therefore the caste Hindus and the custodians of Hinduism were still to attempt a systematic and sedulous grinding and oppression, the day when these drawers of water and hewers of wood would secede from the rest and organise themselves into the most powerful community will not be far off. For what is the earthly or Heavenly use of a religion which shuts the portals of its temples to its own followers, which denies privileges on earth and deprives bliss in Heaven and what for should the 'untouchables' call those people their brothers who at once curb their spirits and kill their souls? Therefore, if tomorrow, what with their own ceaseless efforts and the wholehearted support of pure minded patriots, the Panchamas should become (and who doubts it) the handlers of the sword and the sceptre instead of the handlers of the bucket and the broom, little need our 'P' be surprised and chagrined.

- *Revolt*, 11 August 1929

Leaders! What have you done?

(By Mr. Bhagat Ram)

It is a well known fact that the high caste Hindus in general have for centuries been oppressing, maltreating and showing utter lack of sympathy for the lower classes. However, some of the high caste men are now beginning to publish articles in their newspapers showing some interest in the depressed classes. These articles are mostly written to assure the outside world that the higher classes are now really taking a great interest in uplifting the depressed classes and freeing them from their centuries of bondage. But in reality, there being little of truth in such articles, they do not help the down trodden millions. They simply aid in establishing more powerfully the rule of the upper classes. Instead of seeking to remove the real handicaps, and correcting the evils still prevalent and instead of establishing primary schools for the lower classes, the attempt is now being made chiefly to number all the depressed classes as Hindus. In view of the Census to be made next year, most of the Hindu leaders are making an effort to have Sweepers, Chamars and other depressed classes not enroll themselves as such but only under the general name of 'Hindus'.

Let us have a glance at some of the things the great Hindu leaders amongst the Congressmen are doing now for the depressed classes. In most of the Congress publications and in the Nehru Report it was asserted that already a great deal has been done for the untouchables. However, in spite of such claims, what do we see to be the actual facts and conditions? We see that millions of rupees are being spent on high schools and Universities which are chiefly meant for the higher classes; while the primary education of the vast bulk of the poor, depressed classes has not received the attention it deserves. Instead of helping us they are often found to oppose even the Primary education for the lower classes. Many Hindus of great influence go even so far in their opposition as to speak to some District inspectors of schools to do all they can to hinder the primary education of the lower classes, saying that if these depressed children become educated, what will become of the children of the high classes?

In the present day schools which are almost everywhere so monopolized by the high caste people, we find the actual facts to be that the lower classes cannot get an education along with the far advanced as well as often aggressive children of the higher classes. So

we pray for a separate arrangement of schools for the education of our low classes, as far as Primary education is concerned.

It is true that large sums of money were gathered in the name of Shuddhi or reclamation by many a Hindu leader; but, in fact a large proportion of this money was consumed by the high caste workers employed to carry on such propaganda. But for the intellectual and social uplift of the depressed classes, hardly one thousandth part was spent. Their aim seems not to be the education or betterment of the poor, but rather to add to their numerical strength. Some leaders would teach the *Namo-Narain* text, so that untouchables can repeat it, nothing more. Others would give the sacred thread to the *Shudras* so as to convert them into Aryas; thus making a display for a time, then nothing more. What good does it do to the depressed classes to put the so-called sacred thread around their shoulders? For, as long as the law of *Manu Smriti* is enforced, caste evils will remain. The meaningless rights given us today by one leader in a certain place, may be suddenly snatched away tomorrow by another, at the very same place.

Besides, millions of rupees have been gathered in the name of national causes, but lavished largely on more temporal things, on empty shows on the aggrandizement of the higher castes, on loud boastings of Hindu Spirituality before foreigners, or on Congress propaganda here and abroad; whilst millions of souls, made in the image of God, are perishing, driven by conditions pitiable, preventable to sufferings. Sometimes our hearts cry out why we have been placed among the Hindus.

If the Indian leaders really feel any sympathy for the sufferings of the lower classes one of their foremost duties is simply to lend a helping hand of fellowship in providing for the primary education of the poor masses. For, it is chiefly through education that a great door of hope will be opened for the uplift of the depressed classes.

Again, public tanks and wells are often closed for the 'untouchables', owing to the deep rooted prejudice of the high castes. High caste Hindu reformers themselves being self-satisfied, are mostly sympathizers in the abstract; but they are generally opposed to any concrete action in the needed reform of the Hindu Law which is largely based on *Manu Smriti* the primal source of our wrongs and sufferings.

Whatever troubles have been and are still being, borne by us are to a great extent from the three high castes and for them we have been engaged in such menial service. In spite of all that we have been very

often exploited in every way and in every walk of life. By this we only mean that broad-minded philanthropists altogether freed from caste and sex prejudices and altruistic individuals are rare in this dark land of ours. In fact, Hindu traditions have added more to the miseries of the world than to its happiness.

So here depressed humanity from its condition of abject misery and woe, cries to us for sympathy and it should strongly appeal to our humane instincts and call forth the beauty of the shepherd's character latent in us all. Yet how many feel there is something inconsistent and unreal in our attitude toward the poor masses.

Whatever a few advantages have accrued to us in the recent past, have not come from the efforts and sympathetic interest of the high castes; but partly from the result of the impartial British Administration and partly from the love and sympathy of some Christ-like Missionaries to whom we and our children shall always be grateful.

- *Revolt*, 29 September 1929

Independence and Touchability

The 31st night of December 1929 will see the declaration of Complete Independence, at Lahore which august event will be preceded by the declaration of wholesale "extinction of untouchability" on the day of Karthika Ekadeshi at Bombay. The leaders who have issued the appeal seem to be convinced of the futility of the "spasmodic attempts" made now and then to solve the question of untouchability. They have therefore appointed the above day for the complete and eternal removal of the curse of untouchability. They desire that from that day onwards, "all those depressed Hindu classes who have hitherto been termed as "untouchables" and kept at a distance should be readmitted into the social fold and allowed to share the common benefits of free association and intercourse in all outdoor dealings, in all public places and on all public occasions, fairs, festivals, processions, meetings etc., including temples of gods which should be considered as the last place for any distinction between man and man." This reads quite good as a proclamation from His Majesty but the spirit of it seems to be otherwise. This is as wiser as to proclaim that "on the night of 31st December 1929 all European officials who are not either born in India

or are not the citizens of Mother India should unconditionally resign their respective posts."

We doubt very much the seriousness of those who have issued this appeal for it is amusing that the leaders have not understood wherein the difficulties for solving the problem lie. The question is not the want of a particular day, but the methods to be adopted in order to bring it into execution. Is it by observing Satyagraha for which the so-called high class Hindus is not ready to take the initiative. We wait for a definite answer.

- *Revolt*, 3 November 1929

1.3 Castes and Conferences

Communal Conference

Pseudo patriots and pseudo nationalists very often condemn communal conferences as being anti-national. The answer has been effectively given by the Nadars' Conference recently held at Porayar. Those who have read the proceedings and the resolutions of the Conference will know how far the community has advanced in recent years. We suppose the resolutions of the Nadars will come as a surprise to the orthodox section of our people. The community which has been more particular about wearing the 'holy' thread, than the Brahmins themselves, has today passed a resolution for discarding it. The community which was set against the Self-respect movement by some mischief-mongers, has passed a resolution extending its support to the same. It is a matter of delight that the Nadars have also passed resolutions in favour of social reform marriages and abolition of caste marks and titles. The Porayar Conference is indeed a turning point in the history of the Nadar Community. Let those who condemn such conferences think for a while whether such good results can be achieved by any other means. We congratulate the Nadars especially the conveners of the Conference, for setting a successful example of other communities to follow.

- *Revolt,* 8 May 1929

The Nadars' Conference, Porayar

The unfurling of the flag of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam was performed by E. V. Ramasami, who in a brief speech warned the public against the mistake of regarding a conference as this as a selfish body seeking to solve its own communal problems. But he was of opinion that this conference afforded an opportunity to bring together all members of the community and enlighten their minds on their duties towards the furtherance of the interests of the country is a whole.

Hon. Mr. M. Krishna Nair, Law Member (1) in opening the conference observed that "conferences like this are very essential for the prosperity and welfare of our country. There are people who hold the view that sectional conferences, like this are calculated to do more harm than good. I do not share that opinion at all. On the other hand, I emphatically differ from that school of thought. The body politic may

be compared to the human body. Human body is composed of different parts such as legs hands and so on. So also the body politic is composed of different communities. If any part of our body, say, if any limb, or any other organ in the body aches or suffer from pain, the whole body aches or suffers from pain. Similarly if any part of the body politic suffers from pain or labours under any disability, the whole body politic must certainly be suffering. Therefore it is why I say that unless all the communities in the country, all communities that form different parts of the body politic are prosperous, the country as a whole, the body politic as a whole, cannot be said to be enjoying prosperity and happiness. Therefore conferences like yours which are calculated to improve the material conditions and prosperity of communities must really be regarded as institutions which work for the good of the country as a whole.

"Conferences like this are also calculated to do good in other directions. It gives opportunities to the leaders in your community who live in different parts of the country to come together and compare notes with reference to the work that they have been doing in different localities of the country for the good of the community as a whole. It gives also opportunities to the leaders of your community who live in different districts to come together and make new friends. It gives you an opportunity to focus your ideas. What is more, it gives you an opportunity to make other communities acquainted with your wants and requirements.

"I am very glad to hear, that you have two newspapers now for the purpose of propagating your ideas. I understand that they are only weeklies. So far so good. But it will do you greater good if you can convert them into dailies. I know also that you are unjustly labouring under some social disabilities. The Government will naturally give you all reasonable help in your attempts, but mind you, ultimately our success depends upon your own efforts. In trying to remove your social disabilities and other disabilities take care to take with you as far as possible other communities also."

Resolutions Passed

The conference met at 9 a.m. under the presidency of Mr. W. P. A. Soundrapandya Nadar, M.L.C. when the following resolutions, among others were passed:

1) Resolves that the government in all appointments and recruitments to offices do give preference to the educated young men of the community;

2) Resolves that to minimize marriage expenses, all meaningless rites be abandoned and marriages celebrated within the space of a day;

3) Resolves that the sangam sets it face against all meaningless rites such as sacrifice of animals in temples and the conducting of elaborate festivals;

4) Resolves that the sangam approves of the underlying principles of the Self-Respect movement and promises its moral and if possible active support to the Devasthanam Committee, Erode, which upholds the cause of Self- Respect Movement.

Nadar Youth Conference

We extract the following from the speech delivered by Mr. M. Krishnasami, B.A., President, District Board Chingleput, on the occasion of opening the Nadar Youth Conference, at Porayar on the 30th April:

I shall only be doing my duty when I say, Beware of the professional Politician. He is a new variation in modern society and possesses potentialities for a great mischief. He has been feverishly busy all through his life and applying himself assiduously to various honest trades. Baffled by systematic failures he has taken to politics as the last refuge and is trying to make a profession of it. He is a clumsy artisan who dabbles with his materials without knowing their proper values. The gift of the gab is his stock in trade which he tries to turn to his own greatest advantage. He plays upon human emotions and pawns human lives in his political gamble. He touches the tender chords of human nature with the subtlety of an enchanter, but is reckless of consequences like the very devil. He plays up his game and when at the end he soliloquies "Ruin thou art afoot; take what course thou wilt." I need not recall here the recent incident in the Legislative Assembly in which mistaken youths took part, whose generous impulses and noble instincts had been perverted by too unhealthy a contact with this class of professional politicians.

Is politics then a forbidden ground for the youth? It may be asked. I say, No: and it is a sincere and emphatic "No", without any mental

reservation. But then I must point out politics is of two kinds, constructive and destructive. Even as there is political genius well applied, there is also political genius misapplied. There is only a thin wall that divides the two, but that makes all the difference. The healthy kind passes into the morbid through perversion and cynicism. Politics of the morbid type must be altogether alien to the spirit of youth. Youth must be healthy and profound with the joy of constructive work. It must discriminatingly place itself open to healthy influences. It must be passive, tolerant and receptive. The spirit of enquiry must be alive. Hasty judgment must be avoided. The impulse for abandon must be kept under stern control. I therefore advise you, Dear comrades, take all the interest in politics that your generous nature is capable of but reserve judgment and impulsive action. The time will surely come for you to have your turn, when the fund of knowledge of men and things you have gained, the spirit of self control and sense of responsibility you have developed will stand you in good stead, and your elders grown too old for active participation will then abdicate in your favor. I have no faith in the bonafides of any man on this side of forty who lays claim to political leadership.

Are we to idle away our life in the meanwhile, you may ask? To this again say No. There is a line of activity which welcomes you, nay, which you alone can worthily take up; and that is social service. You will be discharging your duty by your country, if you gird up your loins and put forth your best energies in the cause of social regeneration. This is identically the same with village uplift or Rural Reconstruction. It may not be worth while for many amongst you to take up this work as a profession. But every one of you can interest himself in it as an avocation. The work involves a certain amount of self sacrifice, and you must prove yourselves equal to its demands.

The work ahead of you is one of organizing human power. Local dissensions must be knitted up and village communities made to sink all petty differences. The rural population must be made to realize its responsibilities to administer its own matters. Every effort must be made to help the villagers keep abreast of the times. By gentle persuasion alone you are bound to succeed. Even the steel clad conservative will appreciate your earnestness and climb down to meet you on your level. This work needs a large reserve of moral strength and bodily endurance. Give your body and spirit the necessary exercise and keep them in proper condition. The time will come soon when they will be put to

the test. You must then be able to stand the trial and acquit your selves honourably. Character is a precious asset of a man, and men of character are the pride of a country. Plain living and high thinking must be your motto in life. Bring down your requirements to an irreducible minimum and fix them there. This will help to smoothen all the rough corners in your nature and fit you up for a heroic life. A consciousness of strength develops in you the spirit of self reliance, and self reliance is the touchstone of self-respect. Your community has taken long strides in recent years and outdistanced many others lost in self-complacency; and it is your duty therefore to see that you keep to the vanguard of progress; With this exhortation. I have much pleasure in declaring *this conference open*.

- *Revolt*, 8 May 1929

First Ramnad District Adi-Dravida Conference

The First Ramnad District Adi-Dravida Conference was held yesterday at Kalanivasal near Karaikudi, under the presidency of Mr. J. S. Kannappar, Editor 'Dravidan' (*the official Tamil daily of the Justice party – editors*). After the reception of the leaders, the procession started to Kalanivasal to the accompaniment of Indian music. A Bajana party singing hymns on Self respect and rationalism consisting of visitors from different places and of the town, accompanied the procession. The unfurling of the flag was performed by Mr. Ponnuswamy Pillai. The flag bore the mottos 'Equality, Fraternity, Liberty and Progress'. In a short and inspiring speech, he explained the significance and sacredness of the flag.

Mr. Ramachandran, B.A., B.L., opened the Conference in an inspiring speech. He exhorted the Adi-Dravidas to discard their slave mentality and work for their social and political advancement. The Chairman of the R.C., Mr. K. Guruswamy then read his address. He appealed to the audience to fight for their emancipation from the clutches of the caste Hindus. He next welcomed the delegates and visitors from the various parts and thanked them on behalf of the R.C.

The president, Mr. J. S. Kannappar, in the course of his address dwelt upon the necessity of educating the Adi-Dravidas. He strongly exhorted the audience to fight for better treatment at the hands of the caste Hindus and wipe the caste system out of existence. Important resolutions relating to the social welfare, civic rights, education and

general upliftment of the Adi-Dravidas were unanimously passed. Among the resolutions, one requested the Government to appoint an Adi-Dravida gentleman as Labour Commissioner and another thanked Rao Bahadur M. R. Subbiah Chettiar and the Rajah of Sivaganga for their princely donations of Rs.10,000 and 15 acres of land respectively towards the maintenance of an Adi-Dravida Home and also requesting the Government to make the scheme a success. A number of speakers addressed the gathering in support of the resolutions. Prominent among them were Mr. Alagiriswamy of Pattukottai, Messrs. S. Murugappa, Editor 'Kumaran', Pachappa Subramaniam, A. R. Somasundaram Chettiar, V. P. Alagan, A. S. John, Susai and Arunachalam of Madura. The students of the Adi-Dravida School at Maruthangudi, then enacted an interesting drama exposing the evils of untouchability and drink. It was much appreciated by the audience. The president in the course of his concluding remarks, made a strenuous plea for the eradication of untouchability and all social abuses and religious malpractices.

Mr. Kannappar's Address

The presidential speech which was delivered by Mr. J. S. Kannappar at the Adi-Dravida Conference held at Kalanivasal, reveals the deep sympathy which he has for the depressed millions of the country. The president, in his untiring work for the upliftment of the downtrodden has understood the real needs of the toiling millions and has laid great emphasis upon the necessity of the immediate tackling of the problem.

He says, "It is often argued that you are treated as untouchables simply because you are illiterate and unclean. It is simply absurd. Justice Krishnan, the Judge of the Madras High Court who belonged to the Thiyya community (*a 'low-caste' community from Kerala – editors*) was not allowed to walk along the streets of Brahmins. Was he wanting in education? Did he lack in cleanliness? Then why was he not allowed? It is due to the inferiority which is attached to his caste. That is why we have set to destroy caste, and we regard nothing else more important than this. It is shameful to record that not only the Brahmins but even the caste Hindus are very cruel towards you. Hence we have determined to turn more of our attention to the innumerable hardships that you are meted out by our own people".

- *Revolt*, 18th August 1929

Devendrakula Vellalars' Conference, Trichy

E.V. Ramasami's Speech

The Second Devendrakula Vellalars' Conference was held on the 29th September in the Municipal Public Hall, Trichinopoly.

Mr. J. S. Kannappar, Editor, *Dravidan*, in unfurling the flag said that the real object of unfurling the flag before the beginning of a Conference should ever be remembered by the flying of the flag. It is not as a ceremony that the flag is unfurled, but only as an indication of the spirit and objects underlying the conference. He wished the conference success and unfurled the flag.

Dr. Subbaroyan, Chief Minister to the Government of Madras, in opening the conference, advised the people not to quarrel over the caste tittles, as they were reported to be doing. For it is a futile and foolish affair to quarrel over names. They should give their children education and strength. If they were married at an early age, they would not be strong. They would not be in a position to do field work. Youths must be strong to do all kinds of work. When he visited schools, he saw youths looking old. That was due to early marriage. If a nation wanted to prosper, it should depend only on youths. They must have strength, courage and ability. The caste distinction should be abolished. If there was no caste, then all were equal and Swaraj would be attained unmasked. They should work for the advancement of the nation. Education was most important. There would be no use in building temples and choultries and making the people idle. It would be of no use for the nation as well as the community. Idols would swamp the country. They must resolve that education was the main thing for their improvement.

Mr. E. V. Ramasami, President of the Conference, in his extempore speech said that the Devendrakula Vellalars, although they belonged to the depressed classes, should not fight for mere titles. They must realize that they were depressed and try to elevate themselves. There were many who styled themselves as Brahmins, such as Sourashtra Brahmins, Viswa Brahmins, Devanga Brahmins, Salia Brahmins and so on. Had they got any equal status with the Brahmin community? In his native place, backward classes and beggars refused to receive presents from that community. When such people were kept in such a state, how could the Devendrakula Vellalars be considered higher in public life

by merely styling themselves either as Vellalars or Pallars? Caste should be abolished. If they think that they were superior to the Adi Dravidas who were behind them, the higher castes would consider them inferior to them. They should all feel that they are human beings and equal. In order to avoid the caste system, the belief in religion should be eradicated. Religion is an impediment to the progress of the nation. The Brahmins with the aid of religion harassed others. They should not be a party to the meaningless ceremonies done in the name of religion.

They are considered as untouchables because they eat dead animals. Do not the high class people also eat animals? The depressed class people eat the cow and the bull. Do the high class people call the Muhammedans untouchables? The high class people kill the cock and other birds, which eat rubbish and insanitary things while the bull and cow eat only herbs and hay. Further, they say that the untouchables do not bathe. Are there not men in the higher spheres who do not bathe for days together? If a middle class man is shut up in a room for some days and given meals only through a window, would he not look unclean? The depressed class people should be given every facility to keep themselves clean and tidy. In the villages there is no water for the depressed classes. The higher caste people decline to supply them with sufficient water. In his native place, water is scarce. Even the middle class people would find it difficult to get sufficient quantity of water. In that case the whole public of the place should be called as untouchables. They must try to give education to their children. The Government had opened schools for their exclusive benefit. Education only would improve their status.

The Brahmins say that they have admitted Nandanar and Panan (*'untouchable' saints – editors*) to their temples. That was to cheat them. If they had really done so and if the puranas were to be believed, why do they now refuse entry to the depressed classes? In the Hindu religion and Christian religion only, such differences exist, but not in Muhammadanism. If those who follow Hinduism decline to allow entry to them, why do they not join Muhammadanism? There they could be free. If they had embraced Islam, the Brahmin would come and move freely with them. Where is untouchability then? … When there was an agitation by the untouchables in Upper India, the Hindus readily gave way. They must all unanimously protest against the inhuman treatment meted out to them. The Nattukottai Nagarathars

had now realized that they were wasting their money in renovating temples, etc., but had begun to build hospitals, schools, etc. The Rajah of Chettinad had donated 30 lakhs of rupees for starting a University at Chidambaram. That was a great boon and the money is spent on good lines.

A resolution was also passed that at the coming Nellore Confederation, the Brahmins should not be enlisted as members in South Indian Liberal Federation.

- *Revolt*, 6 October 1929

Notes to 1.3

1. Hon. Krishnan was a law member in the Executive Council directly under the Governor of the province. This was in accordance with the diarchical scheme of government which came to existence in 1919, following the implementation of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

2 REPORTING ON ANTI-CASTE RADICALISM IN KERALA, MAHARASHTRA AND NORTH INDIA

2.1 The SNDP Yogam and the Self-Respecters

The S.N.D.P. Session

We are publishing elsewhere in this issue a somewhat long account of the 26th anniversary of Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam held at Kottayam on the 6th, 7th and 8th instants. The Travancore State has a population of about 40 lakhs, of which the Hindus count about 21 lakhs. Of the Hindu population, all the depressed communities number about 13 lakhs. Of this big figure, the Ezhava community alone has a population of not less than 7 ½ lakhs, which is more than one third of the Hindu population. The S.N.D.P. Yogam, founded by the lamented Narayana Guruswamy is the most representative organization of the Ezhavas. The Yogam has done a great deal for the past 40 years or so in securing equal privileges and opportunities for its people socially as well as politically. We had the pleasure of witnessing the huge pandal, presence of a big enthusiastic audience and arrangements made for the reception of the leaders. The whole credit goes to Mr. T. K. Madhavan, a zealous worker and the chief organiser of the Yogam. He has spread no pains in making the Conference a grand success. We congratulate Mr. Madhavan and his co- workers for their unflinching work and wish the Yogam a long life and serviceable career.

The S.N.D.P. Yogam, Kottaiyam

(26th Annual session)

The 26th annual session of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, the most representative organization of the Thiyya community began on the 6th May at Kottayam under the presidentship of D. P. Palpu, lately of the Mysore and Baroda services in a tastefully decorated shamiana specially erected for the purpose. A number of other Conferences were also held in the same pandal.

Political Conference

The political conference held under the auspices of the Ezhava Political League began at 10 a.m. with Mr. M. Govindan, B.A., B.L., retired District Judge, in the chair. In his opening speech, the President detailed the various disabilities the community was labouring under. He made reference to Pandit Malaviyaji's recent speech at Madras and showed how the sentiments expressed therein were not acceptable to Ezhavas under the present circumstances. The view held by Pandit Malaviya to the effect that it was impossible to abolish caste system was criticized by the President who cited various instances wherein such attempts were fruitful as in the case of Christian and Mahomedan propaganda. He maintained that abolition of caste was a practical problem and that the Ezhava community had attained much in the line. In the matter of temple-entry, Malaviyaji's opinion that definite rules should be laid down was criticized by the President. The suggestions made by Pandit Malaviya were detrimental to the interests of minority communities. In this connection, he said that the foreign rule which was instrumental in enabling minority communities to demand legitimate representation ought to continue in this land until all such differences were eradicated.

Students' Conference

The S.N.D.P. Students' Conference met under the presidentship of Mr. P. C. Gopalan, B.A., B.L., at 1.30 p.m. The President, in the course of his address, gave an account of the prominent part played by youths in shaping the destinies of the world. He did not think students ought to keep aloof from politics. They could do so without entering into politics as well. He also emphasized the necessity for the formation of a Kerala University. He was of opinion that the Andhra and Tamil Universities ought to prove an incentive for the people of Kerala. The geographical and political division of Kerala was a hindrance for the formation of a university.

Ladies' Conference

The 25th Session of the S.N.D.P. Stree Samajam was held on the 7th morning under the presidency of Mrs. Malika Sreenivasan, B.A., L.T., who delivered an interesting address in the course of which she said that it is necessary that the home must be strong in order that the nation might be strong. It was necessary that the home must be free so that the nation might be free. Home is the training ground of the

heroes of the nation. Homes ought to be the sacred training ground of the heroes of tomorrow. The very men who preached equality, liberty and self-determination are averse to give them the very things they ask for in the political arena. If only they would take the trouble of going through the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly they would find that the so-called bearers of the flag of liberty of India oppose innocent social legislation, such as the Civil Marriage Bill. It was their duty to create public opinion in the land. They could do it more successfully and more effectively. She exhorted them to instill into the hearts of the young, ideas of the brotherhood of men and sisterhood of women so that the caste system that had brought about the ruin of their country which is standing in the way of their progress, which is eating into the very vitals of the nation, which is perpetrating the most monstrous act of injustice, and which is giving licence to a class of people in the name of God and religion to brand their brothers and sisters as inferior beings, be eradicated root and branch from this ancient land of ours.

She sounded a note of warning against what Pandit Malaviya said at Madras. The great Pandit was surprised to find in Madras there was a talk of demolishing caste. On behalf of the large number of persons assembled there, she assured the great Pandit, the standard bearer of India's political freedom that the women of the Presidency with a few exceptions were solidly behind the self-respect movement which was out to destroy caste. "Let me further assure that great Pandit," the President continued, "that we are out to destroy caste, root and branch. We do not believe in demolishing caste in one compartment, while preserving in another. The great Pandit wants caste to be retained on ceremonial and marriage occasions. I say it is here that we must kill caste for it does not require much effort and sacrifice to lay aside caste at Government House dinners and Garden parties.

"I have no objection if any one wants to preserve caste in one of our museums, but it must not find a place anywhere in the country. For if India is ever to progress and attain nationhood, it can only be by killing this hydra headed monster. We are acquainted with the cry of "religion in danger" every time an attempt is made to demolish caste. If anyone tells us that God is against the demolition of caste, I would then say, let us demolish God himself, for such Gods can only be the creations of men who are interested in keeping down other communities in perpetual serfdom for their selfish ends. Who can believe the story that Almighty God who is the creator of every one of us, will favour

such meaningless distinctions? Let us therefore not hesitate to mobilize every force at our command to destroy this pernicious system. Let me here remind you that this was one of the cherished desires of our late Guru."

Another suggestion she wanted to make was with regard to their banding themselves together as social servants to serve the community. She noticed a tendency in certain quarters to claim favours from Government on the plea that they were depressed. If at all they cared for appointments they ought to claim them as their birth right. The auto-suggestion in the word "depressed" was sickening. The sooner the word was removed from the vocabulary the better for them. She concluded by appealing for immediate steps to be taken to extend the organization to Malabar.

Resolutions were passed praying for greater entertainment of womenfolk in public service in the State and urging the necessity for starting Branch Shmajams in different parts of the country.

Self-respect Conference

The self respect conference which began in the evening was presided over by Mr. E. V. Ramasami, Editor, *Kudi Arasu* and *Revolt* who, in the course of his lengthy speech, pointed out that the curse of untouchability had been forced upon a large section of the people in the name of God, Religion, Vedas and Puranas. If at all this blot upon humanity should go, it can be effected only by destroying those agencies which had been and are still responsible for maintaining these differences. Social reformers had failed in their attempt to wipe off this curse, because they neither cared to note the real causes of the sin, nor were they really sincere in their attempt. As long as the cursed Varanashrama, the basis of the so-called Hinduism is allowed to continue, as long as the idol of Rama – the king who killed a "Sudra" for worshipping god, in order to save the life of a Brahmin child – is worshipped, as long as the Puranas which say that Nandanar (an untouchable) was received by God only after he was roasted in the fire, are read and believed by the people and as long as there are Puranas and festivals memoralising the impaling of the humanitarian Jains and Buddhists by the Saivite Gurus – as long as these things continue, the stain of untouchability cannot be effaced from our land.

The President then cited various illustrations from the purana to show

the perpetuation of caste system and untouchability. Then he exhorted the people not to be dreaded by the word "atheism," which is thrown against us by the selfish few. Here he cited the example of Lord Buddha who was sanely unconcerned about the existence of god. He asked why Buddha, the preacher of atheism is called an avatar of Vishnu? He dwelt upon the various interpretations of god given by the so called theists and showed clearly how none of these had any meaning either to the interpreters or to the hearers. Then he emphasised upon the foolish idea that man has come to plead for the "All powerful" God. If all powerful he asked, "Why should he not do it himself?"

His speech was a wholesale condemnation of the Hindu Religion which he called the "Brahmana Religion" and said that the accursed Brahmin was responsible for restricting their religious liberties. He had learnt that several communities which were exposed to all sorts of disabilities, could not rise up, owing to the restrictions imposed on them by religious and communal rules and even success by the door of Satyagraha could not be had if they had not that self-respect in them. He said that Hinduism afforded no opportunities for freedom, that nobody knew where and when it came from, that he hated the Vedas, Shastras and Puranas, with all their restrictions of caste and creed and that he was for demolishing outright the citadel of Hindu Religion, which was so to say a fraud on the face of the world. In conclusion, the president read out the resolutions of the Chingleput Conference, explained each of them, and showed how the self-respect league has made rapid strides within a few years, in spite of the nefarious attempts of the mischief mongers.

Mr. K. Aiyappan, B.A. Editor, *Sahodaran* next spoke endorsing every word of the president and expressed his view that they should be redeemed from the demon of caste and that the speech which Pandit Malaviya delivered at Madras was the one that ought to have been delivered a thousand years ago and that both Malaviyaji and Mahatmaji traded on the vast popularity they enjoy. It was their quiet nature that was responsible for the subject, slavish behaviour and they should rise above the present state of affairs. The meeting came to a close at about 6.30 P.M.

Temple Entry Conference

The Temple entry Conference organized by the S.N.D.P. Yogam was held on the 8th evening under the presidentship of Mr. M. Ramavarma

Thampan, M.A., L.T. Retired Principal, Zamorin's College, Calicut. The president in welcoming Panditji (*Pandit Malaviya – editors*), explained to him the complicated social customs that are doing great injustice to large masses of people and humiliating them in many ways. He touched upon such questions as caste, temple entry and reconversion and clearly explained the position of the community with reference to these matters.

"I do not agree with Mr. Thampan" began the Pandit, "as regards the evils of caste. I do not believe that the institution of caste is an evil in itself. (Cries of why? why?) The evils of caste are to be destroyed, but caste itself should not be removed. (Hissing Sounds)

… The idea of destroying caste is an idle one. (Cries of "no, no") … Hinduism has given us the highest teachings in the world (cries of "no, no. It is only Hinduism that has enslaved our people") …..I understand that at Madras there is a strong feeling of differences between Aryans and Dravidians. I also heard that a set of people are finding fault with Rama, the incarnation of Vishnu (Cries of "no, no; he is our enemy") Rama ki Jai! (Audience shouting, "Ravana Ki Jai!") Veda Vyasa has stated in the Mahabarata – (interrupting, a cry of "We are not here to hear all his nonsense") My Rama is quite different from yours. My Rama is a being that inhabits every atom of the universe. I shall always worship that Rama (cries of "we don't care"). To Mr. Thampan's question, about reconversion, I say there is provision in Hinduism for re-conversion, which I want you to refer to the shastras (Cries of, "damn the shastras"). ... I am of opinion that it is mere waste of energy to be spending your time in quarrels about caste. It is an insignificant question over which we should not waste our precious time (Cries of "no, no; it is the most important"). If you are very particular about temple entry, I ask you, would you allow those who are lower than yourself in society, the pariahs and pulayas, into your temples? (Audience enraged, cries of, "certainly, certainly even more than that")

In short, the whole speech was resented strongly by the audience and vollies of questions came from all sides and created stir and sensation.

Protest Resolution against Mr. Malaviya

The following resolution was unanimously passed: With due respect to Malaviyaji, S.N.D.P. Yogam dissociates itself entirely from every sentiment expressed by Panditji in his speech at the Temple Entry

Conference, except his bare statement that temples should be open to all Hindus, and strongly protests against his plea for preserving caste. This Yogam is strongly of opinion that unless caste system is destroyed root and branch there will be no salvation for the so called lower classes.

(*Note: We are sorry that owing to the differences in reports published in the Madras Brahmin dailies, which we are sure, are done with the deliberate intention of hiding the truth, we are not able to publish the full account of Mr. Malaviya's speech and other counter speeches. The above report, for the most part has been taken from the Madras dailies, and we have written for a complete account of the incident, which will be published, as soon as we receive it – Ed.*)

– *Revolt*, 15 May 1929

Mr. M. Govindan's Address

The following is the speech delivered by Mr. M. Govindan, B.A., B.L., Retired High Court Judge, General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam when he presided over the unveiling function of the portrait of Mr. E.V. Ramasami:

Permit me Gentlemen, to thank you heartily for the great honour you have done me in asking to preside at this meeting to unveil the portrait of the founder of the Self Respect League. I am not vain enough to suppose that your choice in this instance has been guided by considerations of personal competency. I happen to be the General Secretary of perhaps the oldest society in India engaged in the uplift of a large section of the people labouring under caste imposed disabilities. I know that it is on account of this office that I am holding and my humble labours in the field of Social Service, that I have been accorded this unique honour.

Hindrance to Nation

Every one can understand that a man may be high or low on account of the sum total or fund of his qualities the mere accident of birth being irrelevant. But caste stamps one as high or low on account of birth. This is an irrational anachronism. Whatever purpose the institution of caste might have served once, nothing disfigures the Indian society today, so much as the tyrannical caste which assigns an arbitrary rank to a person irrespective of his qualities and qualifications and attaches an indelible stigma by birth to a large section of the human race. It has cut up society into a number of water tight compartments which cannot

effectively co-operate with each other for the commonweal.

Can Caste be mended?

Caste is organized iniquity. It cannot be mended. There are "Patriots", who honestly think that they can apply the surgeon's knife and remove the evils of caste by detaching from it the idea of the "low" and "high". This is an idle dream. It is impossible. The ideal of high and low forms the very essence of caste. It has been so long and so indissolubly intertwined with it that detachment is impossible.

Caste must go

For Indian society to evolve into a homogeneous nation, a necessary preparation for the democracy that is coming, caste must be wiped out of existence. This truth has been recognized in the Malayalam speaking countries, by the late Saint Sri Narayana Gurusami who taught that the whole human race is only one caste. Universal brotherhood was the essence of his religion. Mr. K. Iyyappan, a selfless young man imbued with the same spirit is engaged in spreading the same message. He has established numerous branches of (Sagodara Sangam) there and *Sahodaran* a well edited Malayalam weekly published from Ernakulam contains spirited articles on the identical lines in which the message is advocated here.

Caste is the route cause of all the evils of Indian society and if it is removed nothing can stand in the way of India's Social progress and political freedom. There will then be perfect freedom of faith and no stigma attaching to any persuasion.

Mr. Ramasami's Mission

On this side of the Western ghats, my friend Mr. E. V. Ramaswami, more than any one else has realized the full significance of this great truth and has come forward prepared to devote his whole life to fight the demon of caste. Mr. Ramaswami as you all know is a strong man. He is a good fighter in the cause of freedom. My first acquaintance with him was during the Vykom Satyagraha days. He was the life and soul of Vykom Satyagraha. After bringing that long continued struggle to a successful termination, Mr. Ramaswami started the Self respect movement. He had other activities. He was a staunch Congressman and non-cooperator. We are not so much concerned with his work in

the field of politics. His heart is now in this all important social work. I heard him the other day addressing an audience of over 10,000 people in the S.N.D.P. Conference at Kottayam expounding the principles of the movement. The speech was simple and direct. Every word that fell from his lips had the ring of sincerity in it and was listened to with rapt attention. The seeds of self respect already sprouting in my land and have been well nourished by him. A rich harvest is bound to follow.

He has started the Self respect movement here under good auspices. I see, he commands an influential following. It is significant that the first annual conference at Chingleput was opened last February by no less a person than the Chief Minister Dr. P. Subbaroyan. Of the necessity for the movement in his opening speech he observed. "It is time we realized that we cannot be a self respecting people politically unless we are self respecting socially. Customs and beliefs which restrict freedom of people in the social sphere cannot prop up a free nation. As long as such customs and beliefs continue, it is not possible to erect a free and democratic state on a society hopelessly given over to all that is antiquated superstitious and unprogressive". The shrewd politician sees that the Self-respect movement is a necessary hand-maid to help him in preparing a field congenital to the growth of democracy, but social justice between man and man apart from all other considerations demands the abolition of this long standing inequity of caste.

Object of our Movement

To remove the unjust stigma attached by birth to innocent millions in this country, to give every man opportunity and facility to develop to the full height of his stature and to save India from the degraded position of forming the laughing stock of the civilised world, Mr. Ramaswami has started the Self respect movement. It has already spread and taken root in many parts of the province. There is more life in the movement than in any other local public movement at present. It is bound of succeed in breaking the barriers that divide them and transforming the people into one united nation.

Honour to our Founder

Let us do honour to the founder of the Self-respect league. The organizers of the Tinnevelly branch of the League have done well to mark their appreciation of the Selfless work of the Hero of the movement by installing a beautiful lifelike portrait of him which will

ever serve to recall his inspiring personality even in his physical absence from their midst. It is a rare privilege to take part in the dedication to the public of such an appropriate souvenir of a noble work so well commenced.

Conclusion

May Mr. Ramaswami be spared long in health and vigour to continue the work to a successful termination and to enjoy the beautiful prospect of the United Indian people envisaged by him, fully realized. With these words I have great pleasure in asking Mr. Chidambram Nathan to unveil the portrait of Mr. Ramaswami than whom there is no more sincere friend of India and its peoples.

- *Revolt*, 28 July 1929

The Sahodara Sangam

(K.C. Raman, B.A. (*Hons.*)

His Holiness Sree Narayana Guruswami now lives in the memory of thousands, as he will surely do for ages to come, mainly due to the indispensable reforms he preached and the modern ideas he propagated among the untouchables on the west coast. The profoundly telling reform this great seer had begun to advocate some 40 years age simply fell flat among the people of "the lunatic asylum of India", and hero-worshippers of the Carlylean type feared that this great man would pass away unnoticed. The occasion demanded the advent of another hero to translate into action the vision of the greater hero. Among the Thiyyars, a community of no mean importance in Malabar, there was a young man, a graduate fresh from the university, who was deeply moved by the teachings of this great Sanyasin. He made up his mind, and very bold step it was, to devote his life-time to propagate the teachings of this great saint. He knew full well that he would be the butt of public ridicule, if he went about preaching the high ideals aimed at by this great luminary, because the utterances of the latter were valued by the people only as the words of a philosopher-poet, to practice which, in their opinion, was only next to lunacy. The founder of the Sahodara Sangham had therefore to be satisfied with a humble beginning.

Mr. K. Ayyappan, B.A. and a few his bosom friends put their heads together and resolved to have an inter-dining with Pulayas who occupy

the lowest rung in our social ladder. These young reformers successfully waded through the difficulty; the idea of inter-dining was put to a crucible-test and the crucible did not break as was expected by many. Mr. Ayyapan and his worthy companions found themselves not only as pure as they were before the experiment, but also far nobler and more magnanimous than the ordinary run of men. They felt that theirs was a mission which alone could emancipate the millions of untouchables who foster the so-called high-caste people at the expense of their life-blood. To eat with the low-caste man was to fight against meaningless custom in the teeth of public opposition. The old men of the locality held a conference and passed the sentence of excommunication with the time honoured alternative that these thoughtless youths might undergo the ordeal of Suddhi. "Never" said the reformers, "We are a determined band".

These young men organized themselves into a society which they called the Sahodara Sangham or the Brotherhood society. Although they had to stand a very severe test for a few years, they carried on their propaganda work with unflinching courage, robust optimism and becoming patience. Due to their continued and strenuous labour for a number of years, they succeeded in winning over to their side little by little, young men full of the dreams of youth, and as a result branches of the Sahodara Sangham came to be started in many parts of Kerala, so much so that there was a great panic in orthodox circle. The custodians of the ancient faith felt that every thing sacred and indispensable in their glorious heritage was being done to dust by fool-hardy youth, while the youths felt that common-sense was triumphing over ignorance as an outcome of the salient and silent teachings of a great thinker.

Now, twelve years after its organization, the Sahodara Sangham has become an accomplished fact. Its founder, an out-caste in its beginning stage, is now considered to be one of those chosen few who are moulding the future society and shaping the public opinion in the Malabar coast. A man of extraordinary originality, a master of simple yet forcible language, and a speaker capable of awakening the best sentiments and the deeper emotions in humanity, he is looked upon by the younger generation as a saviour of the down-trodden, as a missionary who works more earnestly than the so-called missionaries for the golden age to come.

The Sahodaran a good Malayalam Weekly which he very ably edits

aims at the extinction of caste by the propagation of inter-marriage and inter-dining among the masses.

The Thiyyas of Malabar who are the chief propagandists of the Sahodara Sangham have educated their community to such an extent that the so-called sentimental objection has become a misnomer among them. While objection to cosmopolitan dinners has become almost a thing of the past, inter-marriage has only begun to take root. Still, where it has taken place, it has gone beyond the barriers of caste, creed and colour. To mention only two examples, Messrs. C. Unni and K. C. Karunakaran who were in Europe for their higher studies and who have come back with their German wives have been welcomed with great eclat. This may seem a revolt to some, but the readers of *Revolt* should begin to take such things as simply natural. Where there is the kindling of true love, caste, creed or colour should not be allowed to stand in the way of a couple.

The tenets of the Sahodara Sangam have been accepted by the Thiyyas and other back ward classes on this coast – some 40 lakhs of people in all. Even among them there are some who continue to demur and many more who put their fingers on their noses in wonder. The so called high caste people, except a microscopic minority here and there, have not yet begun to listen to the arguments of the founder of the movement. They believe that their purity which they believe in, their ancient customs and manners, and their time honoured religious beliefs, correct or incorrect, should be kept intact. They maintain that "where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise". However, of late there has been a great stir in some matters among these too. For example, the Nambudri youths of Malabar in general and the Nairs of Travancore in particular are on the look out to welcome new reforms. What they cannot put into practice under the existing circumstances, they have at least accepted as good and reasonable. Discontent about the present social arrangements reigns supreme among these as it does among the more aggrieved party, and consequently they have begun to search their hearts. These are signs of a dawning age, an age when men will sing in a chorus:

"All's right with the world."

– *Revolt*, 25 August 1929

2.2 Self-Respect in Maharashtra

Self Respect Conference, Chittegain, Nasik

Dr. Ambedkar's Presidential Address

The first session of the Maharashtra Self-respect Conference was held under the auspices of the Samaj Samata Sangh (Social Equality League), at Chitegain on Sunday the 26th May 1929. The President elect Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, M.A. Ph.D., Bar-at-law with distinguished guests arrived at Khairwadi Station on Sunday morning. He was accorded a grand reception and was taken in a procession to the village where the Conference met. The Conference was attended by over five thousand people including ladies. Most of the gathering belonged to the depressed classes who have been roused of late to their sense of degradation through the efforts of their redoubtable leader Dr. Ambedkar who hails from their class. The conference began its proceedings at 1.30 p.m. in a specially erected pandal. Amongst those who attended and addressed the Conference were Prof. Sabnis of Nasik College, Mr. D.V. Naik, Editor, 'Samata', M. B. Deshmukh, M.A. S.T.C.., R. D. Kowli, B.A., D.V. Pradhan, S. S. Gupte, B.Sc., B.R. Kadrekar, B.V. Pradhan, B.A., L.L.B., Mr. B. K. Gaikwad, N.T. Jadhav, Mr. Bankhambe, a leading contractor of the Nasik District, T. B. Kale, Dani.

The whole of the proceedings was marked with great enthusiasm. Mr. Rokade, the Chairman of the Reception Committee could not make his speech owing to illness. Dr Ambedkar after being proposed to the Chair spoke extempore for over an hour. It was listened to with rapt attention. He referred in the beginning to the idea of superiority and inferiority that has taken deep root into the Hindu society, and which has killed self respect and sapped vitality, the two essential things of leading a life worth the name. This was particularly so in case of the depressed and backward classes. The very names of the members of these classes he added make a vile suggestion that they were a mean and contemptible sort of people. Particular classes have to use ornaments of particular metal a practice sanctioned by religion and suggesting the idea of inequality. He quoted the examples, where the depressed classes were compelled to use the ornaments of base metals even though they could afford those of gold or silver while in some cases they were subjected to brutalities simply for the disobedience of this so called

rule dictated by the Smritis of the type of Manu: Depressed classes particularly suffered from great disabilities and were treated worse than human beings.

The British Government which as a matter of fact should not have recognized the scandalous system of caste in regard to services had to do it even against their declared policy owing to a strong public opinion in favour of this inhuman system. The depressed classes were kept out of public services and were deprived of their just and equitable claim with the result that they have to lead a most degrading and humiliating life. The only remedy to take out this great mass of humanity from the quagmire of slavery political, social, economical lay in imbibing the spirit of self respect and asserting boldly one's rights. He ridiculed the idea that status of equality could be achieved through mere education, a superstition that haunts many a brain. For he said, that though education might do much to mitigate the hardships and sufferings of the downtrodden, yet it would not raise them in social scale by even a whit and would not solve the problem of their social slavery and economic serfdom. He pointed out his own case. Though he had attained the highest academical qualification with all humiliation he had to admit that he was no better than an ordinary "untouchable". Their only remedy lay therefore in destroying the tyrannical system of castes and Varnashram which has wrought their downfall and destruction and has killed their self respect.

At the conclusion of his speech, messages expressing success to the conference were read. Notable among them was a letter and telegram from Mr. E. V. Ramasami, the renowned leader of the Self-respect movement in Southern India. The resolutions that were passed, demanded the abolition of early marriages, caste system, priesthood and urging the legislator to bring a bill to proscribe religious books like *Manusmriti* and Puranas, to stop all state grants to the temples etc. and to utilize it in furtherance of education and uplift of the suppressed classes. The conference came to a close at 9 p.m. The Scout Troop which numbered 150 of the depressed classes kept most excellent order throughout the Conference.

- *Revolt*, 23 June 1929

Brahminism Exploded

Dr. Ambedkar's Lead

It is a well-known fact that there are very few organizations on the western-coast who would sincerely push forward the depressed class movement with a view to give them equal status with their touchable brethren in the Hindu religious polity. With the above laudable object of giving equal treatment to the so-called untouchables in all religious and social public functions and places of worship, a band of young men of Dadar, Bombay organized themselves into a body last year, called 'Samaj-Samata Sangh' (Social Equality league) under the presidentship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., Bar-at-law M.L.C., a most outstanding and eminent personality.

The Sangh has launched upon a campaign of raising the social and religious status of the so-called untouchable classes in right earnest. So far they have given the sacred thread, the supposedly exclusive right of the higher classes, to nearly 20,000 depressed class members in the Bombay presidency. Only the other day they gave it to nearly 1,000 men. It is a point to be remembered that the ceremony is performed in the Vedic style which is the exclusive right of the Brahmins. These acts on the part of the depressed classes are keenly resented by the higher castes and specially the Brahmins who suppose them to be an encroachment on their exclusive privileges. And as a result many an untouchable in the Konkan district is being persecuted. But they are happily undeterred in their determination to acquire equal rights with their co religionists.

The Sangh has also brought about numerous inter-caste dinners in Bombay and mofussil. It was only last year that the Sangh launched the campaign of demanding the entry of the 'untouchables' in the temple of Ganapati at Dadar. Nearly 2,000 untouchables led by Dr. Ambedkar and Messers Naik, Pradhan, Kowli, Kadrekar and other members of the Sangh gathered near the pandal where the image was installed. They were determined to force their entry into the place where the deity was kept. The forces of Brahminism were all mobilized by the vested interests and the help of the police of the foreign government was sought on knees to keep away the depressed classes. But no power on earth can deter men from acquiring their rights, once they are determined to do so. After a tug-of-war for nearly seven hours, a

compromise was arrived at by which the organizers were constrained to treat every Hindu equally. Every one who desired to offer any puja, might do so by putting his materials of worship near the image. Thus the Brahmin was brought down to the level of the depressed class member. In this way, Brahminism had to give in.

This success of the depressed classes made the Brahminism run amock. This year they got a resolution passed in the general body debarring the members of the depressed classes from the right of worship of the image. Not only this, but the management this year led by a so-called Brahmin doctor went so far as to disallow them in the temple where the image would be installed. This was a sort of an open challenge to the Sangh and a further insult to the 'untouchables'. The Sangh and the depressed classes accepted the challenge and gave a battle royal to the Brahminism on Saturday, the 7th September 1929. Since morning the depressed class members began to pour in and at about 10 o'clock the number rose to one thousand. They threatened the management of forcible entry near the image. This year again a large contingent of police headed by a white sergeant was kept in readiness near the place and the image was protected by the police. It is really an irony of fate to witness the Hindu God being protected by the white man against the imaginary fear of pollution by the touch of their own kith and kin and co-religionists. The president of the management, a Brahmin doctor, in the beginning, feeling well protected by the police refused to yield an inch of place to them. But the determination of the people soon brought him to the senses and he then opened negotiations with Dr. Ambedkar who arrived on the scene at about 10.30 a.m. and was received by the people with continued cheers.

After prolonged conversations the Brahminism yielded and accepted the right of the depressed classes to get near the image and worship it with flowers in person. The compromise was declared at about 3. p.m. after nearly waiting for nine hours. Amidst great cheers of Dr. Ambedkar and Samaj Samata-Sangh two 'untouchables' – one mahar and the other mang – triumphantly marched in the temple of the deity and worshipped it with flowers. Thus the Sangh was able to go a step further in their arduous struggle against Brahminism which they are determined to purge the Hindu community of. It is high time that other organizations all over the country who stand for the betterment of the depressed classes launched a similar campaign for obtaining an equal status for

them. It will be in the fitness of things to congratulate Messrs. D.V. Naik, S. S. Gupte, Dr. Madhav Pradhan, D. U. Pradhan, R. D. Kowli, B.R. Kadrekar, G. R. Pradhan, Pagare, Jadhav, Shankerdasbuwas, Shanker Wadavalkar and Sakate on their efforts in the matter.

- *Revolt*, 29 September 1929

A Fantastical Statment!

Seth Jamnalal Bajaj in his statement on the Poona Parvati Temple Sathyagraha has revealed what little he is capable of as the Secretary of the Anti-untouchability Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress. We are glad in so far as the Poona incident has given an opportunity for the public to have a casual look into the green room of the 'All-India' Congress Theatre.

Mr. Bajaj, in his statement on the Poona Satyagraha says that "the existing conditions not only in Poona but all over the country do not warrant starting of Satyagraha by 'untouchables' for asserting their right of temple worship". Evidently the munificent giver in Bajaj has developed into a fire-eating politician." Existing conditions" is a nice phrase more worthy of being handled by political orators and speechifiers of the type of Mr. Satyamurti than a liberal patron like Seth Jamnalal. A safer term for the politician of the present day is hard to conceive of. In most cases, "existing conditions" do not require the necessity of being exemplified or elaborated, and Mr. Bajaj has employed the same stratagem in his statement. He has perhaps thought it wise to refrain from referring in detail to the" existing conditions", which "do not warrant starting of Satyagraha".

We are not unaware of the efficacy of worship and of the moral standard of those who have unceasingly worshipped till now. Robbers as well as the robbed, worship the same god. We never believe for a moment that the admission of 'untouchables' into the temples will bring in its wake, showers of blessings upon them which were hitherto denied. We sincerely hold and propagate that the temples themselves are no more than mere monuments of waste. We long to see the day when the temples (even as the monasteries were done in Russia) will be converted into workhouses, rest-homes, hospitals and schools and their property is directed to more useful and potential purposes. But then our aim in upholding the right of temple-entry is only to establish the right of *all the people* both legally and morally. It is our firm conviction

that the achievement of this right will be the first step towards the final goal. Hence our sympathy for the Satyagrahis.

The ardent champion of the "untouchables" is unconsciously speaking the truth when he further says that "there is a constant danger of creating internal jealousies among the various Hindu communities and also jeopardizing Hindu unity". This is perhaps the implication behind the term "existing conditions". The Hindu-Moslem tension in the North, we know, is the one vital force which is engaging the attention of everyone who calls himself a Hindu and Mr. Bajaj is no exception. That however is not the "existing condition all over the country". At any rate not so at present. Just because Mr. Bajaj feels that the question of temple entry will weaken the position of the Hindus as against the Muslims, where is the necessity for the "untouchables" to continue in their shameful position in society? Why should six crores of people lose their rights and privileges and be waiting patiently for a change in "the existing conditions", simply because their fight for equality will "jeopardise the Hindu unity"? This attitude of robbing Peter to pay Paul is more evidenced in the Khadi Movement where one section of the poor is taxed to pay the other.

"We cannot afford to land the Hindu community", proceeds Mr. Bajaj, "into internecine warfare at this stage of our nation's affair even on the most burning of the domestic problems". Our Nero wants to be playing on the fiddle while Rome is burning. He expects the "untouchables" to put up even with the civic disabilities without having free access to the public wells, tanks and roads. This is as harsh as it is heartless. If Mr.Bajaj is really afraid that the agitation of temple entry would endanger the Hindu unity, it is all the more urgent that the energies of all North Indian Leaders should be wholly diverted to the upliftment of the 'untouchables'. Mr. Bajaj cannot be justified in asking one-fifth of the nation to keep cool and calm when their very existence as human being is at stake. Is he not aware of the painful but inevitable fact that hundreds of "untouchables" are leaving Hinduism every day in South India? Will he calmly receive from us the news that most of them prefer Islam to Christianity for annihilation *ad infinitum* of the social injustice? Will he wake up the slumbering members of the All India Congress and inform them that their opposite ranks are being swelled every day by persistent conversions?

Kalvankor Shastri, an orthodox Hindu justifying the brutal attack of

the mob on the Satyagrahis, has said, "Even if orthodox Hindus had used swords and spears for the vindication of the purity of the temple, I would congratulate them". What under the "existing conditions" does Mr. Bajaj want us to do with this fanatical Brahmin? There is no surer way for the "untouchables" than to convert themselves into Muslims and retaliate by showing their fists to the Shastri and his clan. Endurance has a limit and Hinduism is not a thing of yesterday. Either the diehards of the Shastri's type should change, which is impossible or the religion which is responsible for his fanaticism should perish, which is more probable and practicable. A religion which stands on the bedrock of orthodoxy as exemplified by the Shastri who advocates the use of "swords and spears for the vindication of the purity of the temple" is sure to perish sooner or later: the sooner the better.

For, what is it but hypocrisy to talk of 'purity' in temples, where lizards, flies, bats and similar insects pour their filth on the images of the so-called God. A 'God' or a temple which tolerates the fifth of the non-human elements is said to become polluted even by the mere entrance of human beings! Hypocrisy, thy name is orthodoxy!

There is again another remark of Mr. Bajaj, "whether it is wise unnecessarily to mar a countrywide atmosphere of goodwill by launching an aggressive campaign when there are fairly bright prospects of achieving the end by lesser means". Where are the "bright prospects" and what are the "lesser means", we fail to understand. What has been the result of such efforts in the past? How far have the "lesser means" and "brighter prospects" helped the Indian National Congress with its heavy purse, in the eradication of the evil? Is the suggestion intended only as eyewash? We wait for Mr. Bajaj's reply.

- *Revolt*, 27 October 1929

Temple Entry in Poona

(By Chitragupta, B.A., Poona)

13th of October was the proudest day fit to be written in red letters in the social and religious history of Maharashtra because it was on this day that the so-called submerged classes – I mean the untouchables – awoke from their age-long slumber and ringed the death knell of the superstitious Hindoo religion. It was a day on which the irrational and inequitable and inhuman laws of Manu were thrown to the winds,

because on this day the Siberian mine and the Bastille of the sham Hindoo religion were sapped and undermined under the banner of Reason and Social equality. Now the eventual collapse of these crumbling citadels of priesthood is a question of time. Up to now the proverbially supine slave of Hindoo Religion was averse and wroth (sic) to part with the iron fetters which he had come to like as he was falsely led to believe by the trickery of the priests that he will attain his Salvation i.e., Moksh by strictly adhering to the traditional precepts and practices of his own caste. It was considered by him to be sacrilegious to touch a Brahmin or to enter the holy premises of a temple. But now the angle of vision is changed and the docile worm has truly been provoked by inequities of centuries to turn at bay with all the fury and fierceness of a mighty dragon.

On the 13th of October 1929, an army of the depressed classes marched in battle array against the "Parvati" temple of Poona with the object of entering into the holy place where the image of so called God was kept under lock and key. Every thing was done most calmly, quietly and not violently. The local Authorities, Police and Magisterial were given intimation of their mission.The District Magistrate with his official retinue was on the spot.All the high class Hindus interested in frustrating the object of this noble mission had mustered strong at the foot and on the top of the "Parwati" hill.

The Crusade began but in the first skirmish, as the report goes, the so called peace-loving Brahmans became aggressive and hurled shoes, umbrellas, brick-bats and such other conventional missiles. In the band that was prepared to face the consequence legal and illegal (sic) of their "Satyagraha" there were some honorable ladies, but all the chivalrous instincts of the Poona Brahmans died when they did not spare to jeer, hiss and hoot at them in all sorts of obscene cries and gestures with the effect that the women had to withdraw from the fight to a place of safety. But the leaders of this Heroic band of warriors were as firm as adamant, and as dauntless as martyrs. They stood to their guns. With the perfect ease of mind, nerved and braced by the righteousness of their cause, they began to scale the hills of the temple.

On their way, the maddened mob of the Brahmin youths all steeped in the superstitious notions of their religion were hooting, heckling, howling at them by wild shrieks. But this noisy opposition did not deter the members of depressed classes from pursuing their course, so

as a last resort all the fury of the high class Hindoo, exhibited itself in attacking and assaulting the poor helpless but iron-willed and resolute party. Blows rained thick like hail stones on their heads. Stones were pelt incessantly with the effect that the Police and the Magistrate had to arrest some of the high-handed aggressors and dissuade the 'Satyagrahis' from their noble mission. As true soldiers they refused to budge an inch but ultimately discretion prevailed as it was the better of valour. Thus for a time curtain fell on this most edifying spectacle.

Some of the depressed class leaders got wounds for which they are being treated in the Hospital. For a time there is a lull at Poona but I am afraid it is a lull before the storm. I am sure that I shall not be a bad prophet if I prognosticate that in the city of Poona, there will dawn a day, not very distant, on which the depressed class people will have achieved their goal. The awakening is there. The rousing passion is at work. The keen and burning desire will find an outlet for itself because when there is a will there is bound to be a way. Necessity is ever the mother of invention. The fate of orthodoxy in Poona is sealed. The hidebound conservatism is nearing its dooms day. Its days are now numbered.

The blood-shed by the depressed classes at the foot of "Parwati" hill will like a martyr's blood prove to be the seed of a rising revolt and resolution which will overthrow and pull-down even the sky-scraping mighty structures of temple closets. Imagine how the times are rapidly changing. Only a century and a score of years back was such a thing even thinkable or dreamable much less possible or feasible to attempt and achieve? No, not in the least, for at that time, there was the so-called rotten 'Swaraj' the tyrannical and despotic Native rule. A rule of Brahmins who had proved traitors to the descendents of Shivaji and had enhanced their power and prestige at the cost of Satara Gadi, where the scions or Shivaji were ruling as ornamental figureheads. The real reign was of the Peshwas. It was one of their Peshwas – Nana Saheb – who built this 'historic' 'Parvati' temple in the name of that Goddess on a small hillock about 250 feet from the foot of the hill to the south of Poona, at a distance of about 2 miles from the palace of the Peshwas.

Had in those blessed days of 'Swaraj' any one of the depressed class men raised his little finger against the inclination of the Peshwas, or for the matter of that any Brahman of Poona, what would have been his fate? He would have met the most barbarous and cruel death. His eyes

would have been burst with red-hot iron rods. His ears filled with molten lead and such other metal and at last even his dead body would not have been spared. It would have been tied to the tail of a donkey and paraded through all the streets of Poona and then the fragments of his bodily frame thrown to the vultures and this would have all been done in the name of damned religion. Better such a religion is damned for ever than a poor soul so ruthlessly killed, limb by limb and inch by inch. The above punishment is not at all imaginary though it is horrid and gruesome.

The students of history full well know how one 'Ghasiram Kotawal' met his death at the hands of the angry mob of Poona Brahmins. He was literally lynched and what was his fault that made him liable for such a ghastly punishment? It was that he as a police officer in charge of the town of Poona, got some roaming and ravaging Madras Brahmins who were notorious night hawks, arrested and locked them in one room for the night. Next day in the morning all the Poona Brahmins demanded the handing over of this dutiful police officer whom the weak Peshwas did. The poor Ghasiram was literally stoned to death. So also the brother of Holkar in broad day light was tied to the feet of a furious and mad elephant and trampled to death, for which the then ruling prince of Indore did wreak vengeance more than enough. He not only invaded Poona but like Nadir Shah Durani who had burnt Delhi, he sacked and burnt down Poona and ordered his soldiers to loot every shop and plunder every citizen whose only fault was that he owned his house in Poona and that he happened to be the resident of Poona.

The Native bakhars (*accounts of the Maratha rulers of western India, dating back to the 17th century – editors*) are replete with such thrilling and blood curling incidents. Thanks to the British Rule that human rights are claimed and clamored for with impunity by the so-called Sub-human classes. Leaders like Lala Lajpatrai and Gandhi were denied entrance in some temples in the south by the superhuman class as whose religion compeers in Poona are dying hard at the hands of the depressed class crusaders. The victory is bound to be with those whose cause is right and righteous. But Satan has got to be hurled into the hell before the rule of God is firmly established in this world.

I again congratulate the leaders of the depressed classes who infused ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity in the docile section of Hindoo society who under the iniquitous laws of Manu are no better than

cattle and chattels. Thousands of years back when this Code was compiled in conformity with the then customs and usages, the depressed classes had no social status, they were deemed as sinners whose even shadow would pollute a pure Brahmin. It is high-time now for us all to allow such nonsense to be seen in cold print. The laws of Manu deserve to be observed in their breach. His Book is an emblem of high-handed and cruel orthodoxy and the miss-rule of superstitious rulers following the Dictates of Sham religion as propounded to them by unscrupulous and vicious priests. To bury these antic and ancient silly laws we must unfurl the banner of 'Self-respect' and raise the clarion call of equality, liberty and fraternity and the rule of the proletariat which shook and shattered the foundations of the unholy shrines where the lords spiritual and temporal were ruling the roost with iron hand and crushing the dumb millions under their iron heels. But a Voltaire, a Rousseau, a Luther, a Tolstoy or a Lenin turned the tables and tore them to pieces.

The slogan of every Youth in the country should be 'Down with the priest-craft and up with Self-respect', then and then alone brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God will loom large on the horizon of pure religion.

I hail the first Batch of crusaders who fired their first shot at the hydra-headed monster of inhuman Seclusive laws of Hindu religion, by besieging the hillock of Parvati to affect an entry into the sacred precincts of the temple. It is the inalienable birth right of every true Hindu to worship his God in any public temple but to uphold this right is neither an easy task nor its path strewn with roses. One has to bear his cross and wear the thorny crown to achieve this noble mission. For the spread of true religion and for the vindication of human and equitable doctrines and for the propagation of true Gospel, Lord Christ had to be crucified, Muhammad had to flee for life from place to place. Buddha and Mahavir in India, even long before Christ and Muhammad had to carry a strenuous war against heavy odds at great personal sacrifice, Luther had to rebel and revolt against the mighty pontiff of Rome at the risk of his life, nearer home and nearer to our times, Tukaram the Socrates of Maharashtra had to pass through fire and brimstone of the opposition of blind and bigoted Brahmin orthodoxy who it is shrewdly suspected buried him alive in the watery grave of the Indrayani (a river).

Within the living memory, Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati and

Mahatma Jotirao Phule for their inordinate zeal of social and religious reforms were made a target of attack by the so-called 'Sanatanis'. Even Mahatma Gandhi rightly called the living Christ of India for his personal purity and piety is not spared by the false prophets of Hindu religion. They curse him with all sorts of abuses and even challenge his integrity. When he gives his opinion on religious matters and hence though he is on the highest crest of political popularity, yet in matters of social and religious reform his prestige is at its lowest ebb. Mahatma Gandhi, the roaring lion in the political field and the live volcano of non-co-operation movement is changed into a bleating lamb and a broken reed when he steps into the close preserves of sacerdotal order to purge it of its abuses and to redress its deep seated wrongs. This high priest of Charka and the idol of Swaraj mongers is pulled down from his high place of power and shattered into pieces as soon as he carries his experiments with truth in the field of religious reform by espousing the cause of the depressed classes and by championing openly the post-puberty and widow marriages. But ultimately in the struggle of vice and virtue the latter is bound to triumph over the former and so I have not the least doubt that there will dawn a proud day when the untouchables of India will rise to the full stature of their height and take their place of honor by the side of their more fortunate brothers. The wind in blowing in that direction and I with my mind's eye see the shadows cast by those coming events.

Lastly I beseech my miscalled untouchable brethren to push on with their programme and not to drop this noble cause by fighting shy in the midcurrent of their activities if any red-rag is dangled before their eyes from the quarters of their inveterate enemies. It is truly said that the battle of freedom once begun and handed down from the bleeding sire to the sanguine son is never lost but ever won. Let therefore the moribund soldiers of the Self-respecting and God fearing army of the depressed classes gird their loins and start their onward march and fight their battle to the last soldier in the last ditch with the firm and fervent belief that 'God' is in Heaven and everything is alright in the world and that He helps those who help themselves.

- *Revolt*, 3 November 1929

Self-Introspection Please!

The Indian Thinker writing on the Parvati Temple Satyagraha has some mischievous things to say on "Progress." "As part of its (progress)

programme", writes the journal, "people who once married within their own separate compartments are wishing to marry outside, People who had their own temples to worship in and who did so with faith and satisfaction are clamouring and even fighting to use the temples of other people, even though their faith in temples generally, not excluding their own has distinctly waned."Very splendid indeed! Let us try another idea under the same constructions: "As part of ORTHODOXY'S programme, people who once lived in solitary huts are living in big houses. People who had no temples to worship in and who reveled in drink and sacrifice are clamouring, and even fighting to use the temples of other people, even though their faith in temples, generally including those of others, is distinctly nothing". Does this remark suit the Editor and his clan?

- *Revolt,* 10 November 1929

2.3 Fighting Caste in North India

The Lahore Letter (Lahore 21st June 1929)

Dear Sir,

The "Revolt" has interested us greatly. Its articles represent the true spirit of Self-respect, which the Non-Brahmins and others, the victims of the iniquities of caste system should imbibe in them. We are especially glad to note that the Self- respect movement is a veritable crusade against the present day institution of Varnashram or caste system as we call it in the North. We have been giving currency to your articles in the "Kranti," and you will find one or two articles translated into "Urdu" and inserted in the next issue of our magazine.

You will be interested to know that there are very potent forces working in the North to uproot the evil of caste system and there is remarkable awakening among those who have been suffering under the iron heels of this injurious system. The people are realizing as never before the havoc done by the caste system and when these ripples of dissatisfaction combine with the waves rising in the South, they are destined to take the form of a huge storm, which will sweep all these unnatural barriers put up between man and man, and the Hindu society will become a homogenous whole.

It is the misfortune of India that such leaders as Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and others do not see the danger, and are still harping the tunes that suited the times a century age. In order to make the North and South join together in this important task of demolishing the birth distinctions which are eating the vitals of Hindu society, we have decided to start a fortnightly paper in Hindi, which will be of the same type as the "Revolt" and we believe it will prove to be a real link between your movement and ours…

In the best of bonds,

I am yours sincerely, Secretary, Jat Pat Torak Mandal, Lahore.

- *Revolt*, 30 June 1929

Social Persecution

(By Har Bhagwan, Lahore)

People of the North are not so conservative in social matters as those of the South. The incessant inroads of the foreigners from the North-West, which culminated in the Muhammadan conquests, and the consequent migration of the Brahmins to the South, have been responsible for making the forces of orthodoxy somewhat imbecile. The effects of the superiority of the Brahmins are therefore not so terrible in the Punjab as in other Provinces. There are places – especially towns – where the cobra of caste distinctions has been made quite impotent, but the citadels of orthodoxy are also not wanting, where organized opposition is offered whenever a spirited soul ventures to break away form the fetters of caste.

Recently two inter-caste marriages have been celebrated under the auspices of the Jat-Pat Torak Mandal, Lahore, one at Chiniot Dirstict Jhang, (Punjab), and the other at Lahaksar, District Sharanapur (U.P.). The opposition was so strong at Chiniot that the parties concerned have had to smuggle through to Lahore for getting the marriage consecrated. At Lhaksar social persecution grew so worse and even fatal that the marriage ceremony was performed under Police vigilance. At Chiniot the brother of the girl, who is a doctor, was subjected to severe persecution. He was not only expelled from his caste brotherhood but was also forced to vacate his rented shop. Hindus did not give him any place for carrying on his business, for which he was willing to pay any amount of rent. When a shop was secured from a Muhammadan, the Hindus were audacious enough to have a theft expected and his things carried away. But our hero was not cowed down, and we are glad he is still suffering the persecution patiently and cheerfully. The bridegroom on the other hand has not yet been advised to return to his home for fear that his new wedded wife might be snatched away from him, and he is in exile for over a month now.

At Lhaksar, Mr. Vidya Brat, the only guardian of his sister was threatened by the caste *Panchayat* to dissuade from marrying her out of his caste, and thereby to save himself and the bridegroom party from bloodshed. After the culprits were bound down and the police had placed a picket at the village our courageous friend was able to have the marriage celebrated, with full-pledged boycott from his relatives and caste people.

These spirited souls are the members of the Jat-Pat Torak Mandal, Lahore, and we are proud for the determination and capacity for patient suffering that they have exhibited. The movement for caste destruction is sure to flourish with the increase of interest among young men and women to purposely break caste in marriage, and we are happy that our members are made of that stuff. These persecutions will disappear with the multiplication of inter-caste marriages, and even if they persist they will add fuel to the fire. The foundations of orthodoxy are shaken, and I can visualize the day when the North and South will combine in their effort to purge India of the evil of caste system.

– *Revolt*, 25 August 1929

Wanted: A Social Revolution

(By Mr. L. Gobind Ram Khana M.A., LL.B.)

Time and again have I ruminated over the destiny of my community; and this has always resulted in bringing before my mental vision the doleful picture of a mighty nation, the custodian of a splendid culture conceived and evolved in thousands of years, crumble into decadence. I have always tried to shake off this dismal vision, but in spite of best efforts have always failed to do so. Sometimes a tiny ray of hope has appeared to silver this lowering cloud, but only to disappear as soon as it loomed on any mental horizon. Painful though it be, I have seen the Hindu community struggling in the throes of death. The activities of the Arya Samaj to regenerate Hinduism and the efforts of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha with its ramifications all over India to consolidate the Hindus and infuse new life into them, have appeared to me in this mood of despondency the flickering of a wick close to its extinction.

The present Hindu community looks like a mere skeleton of its old self, the vitals whereof have been eaten into by a canker which has had its seat in its heart for untold of centuries. One can easily see what this canker is. It is none other than the caste system, which is the most peculiar institution that the Aryans settling in Bharatvarsha built up, but which carried in itself the elements of dissolution of their own society. I wonder very much if the caste system ever did any good to the Hindu community, as far as I can look into the past with the aid of what little knowledge of history I possess. I cannot see that the stratifications of Hindu society into layers of rigid and inflexible castes

was ever of any benefit to the society. In Hindu history we find a pristine fluid caste system of the Aryans gradually solidified into rigid classes. We also find vestiges of struggles on the part of lower caste to shake off the dominance of the priestly classes, but it appears that though these struggles at times relaxed the grip of the dominant priestly classes, this grip always became tighter over society afterwards.

It was perhaps the lengthy and complex rituals attendant upon all important religious and social functions, which gave the Brahmins a firm hold over the other classes. But whatever the reason, one bad example led to another and every class began to assert its superiority over those below it in social hierarchy. Commingling of blood, inter-dining and even free inter-communication between different classes of people stopped and all those forces which go to create a strong nationality thus ceased to work. Bonds of sympathy between different classes of people weakened, and class arrogance increased. Lord Buddha saw how detrimental this class arrogance was to the attainment of highest spirituality and final bliss. He raised his powerful voice against caste system, and preached religious and social equality and the element of social democracy was for the first time introduced into two spheres. But with the decline of Buddhism, the evil genius of the Hindu society reared up its head again and society relapsed into its old division. These divisions multiplied, now we are faced with the unifying spectacle of castes divided into sub-castes and sub-sub-castes *infinitum and ad nauseum*.

Even a slight insight into Indian History will show what disastrous effects this caste system has had on the political life of the Hindus. The analysis of the cause of the political subjugation of the Hindus by foreign invaders will bring into prominence two things: firstly over-refinement of the masses and their aversion to fight secondly, the caste system. Otherwise such an awfully speedy subjugation is inexplicable considering that India, was teeming with millions, whereas the invaders came comparatively in very small numbers and were faced with almost insuperable natural barriers, lofty mountains, impenetrable forests and mighty rivers. This is an astounding fact. No other great nation was so easily conquered. The history of our foreign invasion is a history of great humiliation and shame brightened up only by flashes here and here and there of heroism of the Rajputs. Rajputs were the only fighting class, and even they were by no means united among themselves.

Whenever, therefore, a Rajput army was defeated the whole population lay at the mercy of the invaders because the existing caste system had prepared no other class of people to put up a fight. That defeat of one small army of the Kshatriya class was taken as a providential defeat of the entire kingdom.

It is wrong to suppose that the conversion of the millions of Hindus to Islam was entirely due to the force employed by the Muhammadan rulers and invaders. The Muhammadan invaders were no doubt fired by enthusiasm of proselytisation and made large conversions at the point of sword, but all the conversion that has taken place during the last eight centuries cannot be ascribed to sheer force. The Muhammadan political domination practically ceased to exist when on the ruins of the Moghal Empire, the Mahartta kingdoms rose up in Deccan and Central India and the British power reared its head in the Punjab. But conversion has never ceased. Unpalatable thought it may be, rugged truth must be owned, that it was because of the rotten social system of the Hindus and the power of assimilation of the Muhammadans that a steady stream of Hindu converts into Islam has gone on. With the ascendancy of British power, forcible conversions had stopped but did the conversion of the Hindus stop therewith? Let us not console ourselves with the current idea that the conversion of the Hindus into Islam was the result of sheer brutal force. Self-complacency is mortal's greatest enemy. We must shake it off if we want to get at the root of the evil. To my mind compulsory widowhood, social inequality among different classes of the Hindus, and almost inhuman and barbarous treatment which we have accorded to those, whom we are pleased to denominate as submerged classes have combined to drive millions of Hindus into the fold of Islam. This conversion is more likely to increase in near future than to decrease, until the circumstances are entirely changed. The spirit of equality is stalking abroad. All over the world the forces of democracy are leveling down differences and are creating equal opportunity for mankind by razing down barriers between man and man. India is no longer an isolated country, and the world forces cannot fail to react upon its social system. The so-called depressed classes have also begun to feel the touch of the 'wind' and their breasts are now heaving with new aspirations. Their craving for an equal and more humanitarian treatment has increased, and if their appetite is not satisfied, while living as members of the Hindu Society, they are bound to seek this satisfaction in another society. The result is clearly the

dissolution, and extinction of the Hindus. Because there is very little likelihood that the Hindus will mend their system. They have had during the past and they are receiving in the present most glaring warnings of the fact, but they have taken no heed. The Hindus are hopelessly lost to all reform. Every reform movement in India only succeeded for a time and ultimately dashed itself into pieces like breakers against a rock of stone. Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir, Ramdas, Eknath, Namdeva and all the saints have from time to time placed before Hindus the idea of equality of mankind but their teaching have failed to transform the Hindu Society. The Hindus seem to be possessed of such a perverse mentality that to change it seems a hopeless task. Therefore, I say that the Hindu Society is running to its inevitable course of destruction.

Reform being impossible, the only chance of salvation of the Hindu society which I can conceive of, lies in a radical revolution. I wish there were existing in India some great man, who forgetful of distracting problems and fired with a single-minded enthusiasm to purge the Hindu society of this corrosive evil of caste, would take upon himself, the task of gathering up the forces of revolt against the supercilious and haughty upper class Hindus. I wish Mahatma Gandhi had taken upon himself this task, because this is the mission which requires faith in equality, courage, fearlessness, imperviousness to public censure and fortitude against stormy opposition – qualities which Mahatma Gandhi possesses in pre-eminence. I wish I could myself be a standard bearer of his revolution. I wish I could engender in the heart of the people of the depressed classes, the untouchables, a spirit of revolt, a spirit of the true Satyagraha, to enable them to force the hands of the Brahmins and other high class Hindus to renounce their unholy prerogatives and see eye to eye with their trodden brethren on a footing of equality. For, why should these slighted people beg of the so-called upper classes a concession for more kind consideration? Why should they whine and fold their hands and supplicate in all humility to be allowed to draw water from a well, or for such small concessions, which we do not deny even to cattle?

Equality is their right and if the Hindu society is slow to acknowledge their rights, these rights must be wrested from their hands by force. Social revolution therefore is the only means of salvation, if it could be brought about. Will my voice reach the haughty Brahmins of the South who regard themselves as heaven-born and the rest of the humanity

contemptible creatures, even below the rank of beasts, not only whose touch but even the shadow of most of who pollutes their sacerdotal selves? For them the whole humanity is divisible into two sections. Brahminic and Non-brahminic, the former being the most sacred beings and the latter made of a far inferior stuff and not fit to touch them of their garments. Is this contempt for mankind not enough to provoke the wrath of heavens? Hindu India is rightly punished for the sins of such supercilious people as these. And the heavens will not be appeased till we succeed in pulling down these false priests from their high pedestals.

- *Revolt*, 24th November 1929

Caste (Jat Pat Torak Conference)

Among the many conferences that were held under the auspices of the Indian National Congress at Lahore, the Jat Pat Torak Conference held under the auspices of the Jat Pat Torak Mandal (Society for breaking caste) deserves our closer attention. This conference whose proceedings we shall publish in detail, later on, and whose resolutions appear elsewhere in this issue, is certainly the most important of the conferences held during the Congress session. When we say this is an important one, we mean it is so, not merely, because its creed of the destruction of caste is also the chief creed of our Self-respect movement, but there is a general feature in the Conference itself which should not be passed over by us. It is almost a hackneyed saying that "a man is known by the company he keeps". It was only two years back that the same "All India" Congress, during its session at Madras saw its own votaries holding a Varnashramite Conference at Madras. The same Congress, with a mere change of place from our "cultured" presidency to northern most Lahore, has changed its "colour" (Varnam) so suddenly, and so wonderfully that it has allowed the holding of a conference (Jat Pat Torak) entirely opposed to the principle of "Varnam" i.e., caste. This event will give some idea to our North Indian comrades, of the social condition in the South, and of the way in which the wind is blowing in South India.

We remember in this connection, Mrs. Sarojini's (Naidu) famous tribute to the "pioneers of liberty" here, that "the South Indian Brahmin is as proud and arrogant as the Englishman". We are sure, our renowned poetess had in her mind nothing but the "pride and arrogance" of caste and colour. The Jat Pat Torak Conference reveals another truth,

namely, that more depends upon the manipulators of events than upon the events themselves. If the Madras Congress had only shown its disapproval of its votaries holding Varnashramite Conference, then there would have been no Congress at all. Similarly it is no wonder, if the Lahore Congress had not allowed the Jat Pat Torak Conference, there would have been no Congress at all in Lahore. This is why we observe that the event is important from many aspects.

Before proceeding to the resolutions, we wish to make a few observations to our readers in the South, about the working of the Jat Pat Torak Mandal itself. The Mandal is working wholeheartedly for the destruction of caste, which it believes, and rightly believes to be the only way to national unity and solidarity. This mission it carries through its Urdu monthly "The Kranti", (of which we had had occasion to write in these columns more than once) which is published with impressive illustrations and instructive articles, and through the publication of frequent pamphlets in English and Urdu. In practical achievements, the Mandal, under the able guidance of its President and Secretary seeks to carry out its noble mission by the encouragement of inter-caste marriages and inter-dining. As such, it is needless further to point out to our readers the importance of the Mandal in general, to our country, and in particular, to our movement. With the full assurance of writing more upon the Mandal and its achievements, on a future occasion, we wish to make a few observations upon the resolutions.

The second resolution "calling upon all kinds of Hindu organisations to include in their programme of work the discouragement of present caste system and encouragement of inter-caste marriages", is one that needs the careful attention of all the various Leagues and Associations. In this connection we cannot but refer to the shameful action of the "biggest political organisation in India", in not having allowed Mr. R. K. Shanmugam to table a similar resolution in the Subjects Committee of the Congress held at Madras. That the caste system has been the "generous gift" of the priestly class and that it is still being nurtured by the same community with the help of the numerous puranas, and religious texts, needs no repetition here. So it is evident for the reformer wherein the caste has its origin, and where exactly the axe of reform is to be laid.

The third resolution "calling upon all unmarried young men and women to hive up the consideration of caste while entering into

matrimonial alliances", is a wholesome advice that should be immediately taken up by the younger generation of India. For, the responsible work of breaking up the barriers of caste has devolved upon the shoulders of the young, for it is they who are going to reap the consequences of the past actions of their forefathers. It is time therefore, that the voice of youths gives a ready response to the call of the motherland, in getting rid of the untold social evils existing in our country.

The next resolution of forming a committee to "introduce a Bill in the Legislative Assembly for legalising inter-caste marriages" is fundamentally the most important of the resolutions passed in the Conference. For, very recently we heard in some quarters, vile attempts made by the interested and affected few, for illegalising inter-caste marriages conducted under self-respect methods. To legalise such marriages which are increasing in numbers, it is essential that a law is immediately enacted in order to save the worry of undergoing the tedious and undesirable task of registration.

The fifth and sixth resolutions "advising Hindus of all classes to abstain from mentioning their caste at the time of the census operation and urging upon the Government the necessity of framing the Census Law in such a way as not to make it obligatory on any person to give his caste at the time of census operations" are resolutions ventilating more or less our own opinion on the matter. For we have a mind not only to ask the self-respectors, as far as possible, not to give their castes in the forthcoming Census, but also to declare that they are *not* Hindus but that they are either Self-respectors, Rationalists or Free thinkers. We insist upon giving up the name "Hindu" because, it is in the first place a fabulous name, having no sane origin nor meaning behind it. Then secondly, the term "Hindu" itself is synonymous with the divisions of caste, and so inseparable are both, that the one vanishes of its own accord, when the other is done away with. Hence we not only applaud such resolutions but also wish the Jat Pat Torak Mandal co-operates with us in bringing about the above aims to practical achievements. While extending our hearty congratulations to the founders of the Mandal and the organisers of the Conference, we promise our warm support also in the noble and generous task that they have pledged themselves to do.

– *Revolt,* 19 January 1930

3 AGAINST FAITH AND CASTE

3.1 The Idea of Karma

A Spell

Here is a paradox: A vast country interspersed with high mountains and wide valleys. Huge rivers encircle the land, fertilise and irrigate miles and miles of the plains. A long coastline borders the deep oceans. There are direct lines of communications with the very ends of the earth. The mines are rich with the mineral treasures. The fields serve as the granaries for the whole world. There is infinite scope for industrial and agricultural expansion. The people are hard-working, intelligent and brave. Indeed, all the contributory factors of prosperity and civilization are present in all their details. But look at the prospect. What a picture stares you in the face! Poverty and disease, ignorance and slavery. How has this apparition shot out of such promising features? Can poverty result from plenty? Can ignorance be the outcome of intelligence? Can a brave people be enslaved? Obviously they can, for such is the lesson that India teaches today. The negative is produced from the positive before your very eyes.

Our people are under a spell. Our material resources do not avail us because we are bound hand and foot disabling us from making use of them to our prosperity. We cannot exercise our intellect to dispel ignorance because our minds are tethered to a superstition and the domain of knowledge is kept as a close preserve. Ours is not to reason why, ours is but to do and die. Hence the result that we starve amidst plenty, we slave in an age of freedom.

How does the spell work and how shall we break it? That is the investigation to which this journal will be devoted. We shall briefly indicate the factors inducing the trance reserving a closer examination of them to subsequent occasions.

To begin with there is the superiority complex. The privileged few have created the faith that they are the inheritors of the earth. The many should be content to be mere hewers of wood and drawers of water on pain of ostracism, rendering the delinquent isolated and helpless in the midst of a society infuriated at his act of rebellion. In

order the more effectively to gain adherence to the faith, a policy of *divide et empera* has been adopted, and the cult of Varnashrama has been preached as a religion. The multitude has been divided against themselves by the promulgation of a system of graduated privileges constituting society into a vast hierarchy with the Brahmin gods at the top and the pariah underdogs at the bottom. Narrow domestic walls divide the people into conflicting groups. Artificial barriers of caste and creed prevent free intercourse and obstruct understanding and co-operation.

This doctrine of difference has been fortified by the elaboration of a false theory of heredity. The stigma of caste attaches not to a man's doings but to his birth. No one is born a human being but everybody is born into a pre-existing mould which he shall not leave until death. The human spirit is imprisoned while yet in the mother's womb and it shall not attain freedom until it separates from the flesh. In the name of heredity the common heritage of humanity is denied to one and all.

Not content with invoking all the powers of the earth to help at the maintenance of the tyranny, the resources of the next world have also been taped. The hopes, the fears and the possibilities of the life beyond are requisitioned as engines of oppression. The human gods are not only masters of the riddle of the earth but they hold the key to heaven. Salvation is but a prize for support of the earthly hierarchy. Hell fires consume the rebellious spirits that dared oppose the power of the territorial magnates. The soul shall not rest in peace after death. The dead ancestor is a surety for the loyal behavior of the descendent. The departed spirit is called to account periodically during *srardh* and made to bear the consequences of the transgression of descendents near and remote.

Man is enchained before birth by his past karma working through the law of heredity. He leads a fettered existence through life in accordance with the law of Varnashrama which is his present dharma. At death he is ushered into other worlds where he shall work out his predetermined future through various incarnations. The past, the present and the future form a continuous chain of inevitable which extends on and on, for ever and ever. Shall we attain the strength to break the vicious circle and liberate the spirit or shall we never wake from the trance but slumber away through the generations? The choice is clear before thinking India whether she will walk the path of tradition which leads

to perpetual bondage or whether she will revolt against the narrowness of the past and take boldly to the road of enlightenment and progress. The call has gone forth to Young Indians to attain their birth right of intelligence and insight to dispel the darkness of superstition and slavery to usher in the dawn of knowledge and freedom.

- *Revolt*, 7th November 1928

3.2 Priests and Parasites

Perverted Charities

(By B. G.)

Ignorance and disease are the main causes of human poverty. Attempts to eradicate ignorance and diseases are the best charities. Such humanitarian gifts as the building of educational institutions and hospitals are the real needs of the people but not the temples. The proverbial *Dharidra Narayana* wants bread and not stories. What do the half-starving and half-naked care whether Siva had a consort or Rama's wife was abducted or Vivekananda excelled others in Chicago on Laws of Karma?

Statistics show millions of cases of infant mortality and it is attributed to ignorance. Epidemics have come to stay and grow in the fertile soil of India. It is said, India produces any amount of raw materials but the means to develop them into finished products are shrouded in ignorance not to speak of wastage in men and money under the cloak of religion. India is known for its hospitality but its charities are perverted. Building temples fall under charities but hungry 'sudras' are not allowed in the vicinity. Opening a well is charity but a 'pariah' is prohibited from tasting its water. Opening a school is indeed a charity, but admission is denied to the most illiterate communities of the land. A mutt is endowed only for the princely life of a single individual. He is taken in procession on ornamental chariots and palanquins with footmen and elephants around. It is a charity to throw gold coins at his feet, when in the adjoining *Cheri* copper coins are scarce. Then again, there are innumerable chatrams and mutts where wandering 'devotees of god' are fed sumptuously. These 'devotees' wander about bag and baggage with their 'women devotees' and 'children devotees'. They stay in these chatrams at their pleasure, eating, intoxicating and even enjoying. There are again less fortunate 'devotees' whose *Kavi* (*saffron robes – editors*) clothes and other appurtenances fetch them their daily food. It is this sort of proverbial charity of the Hindus which is responsible for the ills of Hindu society. Feedings are held and millions are fed. But on no one considers how many of the guests have wasted their day's labour. Who is responsible for this loss of one day's labour to the nation and for his encouragement of idleness in the able bodied people?

Professional beggary ought not to be encouraged. Disabled poor people ought to be protected and able bodied beggars should have no room in this busy world. Sooner they quit the world, better for the nation. It is an urgent reform for our leaders to take up, to sweep the land of these undesirable elements, who live on others' wealth, and to pool all sources of charities towards well-directed channels to clean humanity of its ignorance and poverty.

- *Revolt*, 27 March 1929

Our Robber Chieftain

"Forget not the great assays,
– The cruel wrong, the scornful ways,

The painful patience to delays,

Forget, not yet!"

It sometimes happens that those things of which we talk much become less important than those which actually require our greater attention and energy. When man begins to think much, he is very often carried along the current of thought, so that he is tempted to forget his starting point. Similar is the case of the social and religious reformers of the world. This starting point is often missed by them, and they soar high in the heavens, swim among the clouds, talk of divinities and renunciation, write about Oneness and Harmony, and end their lives without any practical achievement of their mission.

India has had great reformers, and has lost such reformers. That is one of the causes of the failure of reform in our country. The advent of the western civilization and the consequent growth of education and culture have endowed us with security of property and person. Though in the name of religious neutrality, the masses of the land are pitifully sent to grope in the dark and are preyed upon by the Christian missionaries, there is no denying the fact that the people enjoy security of life and property under the much-abused administration of the alien government. Robbers, bandits, dacoits and highwaymen have been put down with an iron hand. Public as well as individual property are safeguarded from depredatory tribes and there is guarantee of a peaceful life of the people. But there is in India today a band of opium eaters, (for religion is recognized to be the opium of life) who are roaming about the land with their paraphernalia of palanquins, cavalry and

infantry, banners and drums. The Sankaracharis, Jeeyars, Madathipathis, Mahants and the rest of this notorious category have replaced the Thugs and Pindaris of old. These are the religious heads who are supposed to lead the people on the path of morality and righteousness. All their property in kinds of lands, buildings, jewels and cash money may approximately come to an amount which, when equally distributed in a country like England, can make everyone of the citizens a millionaire. This illimitable amount is supposed to be intended for the propagation of religion, which in turn has to safeguard the position of the Almighty. Indeed, the existence of 7 crores of Mussalmans and half a crore of Christians shows how far the religious heads have successfully safeguarded their religion. This rate of conversion continuing, we will not be surprised, not even sorry, if Hinduism, a religion intended for the welfare of the few, will in spite of its antiquity and philosophy, reach the final stage of decay. We said we won't be sorry, because, a religion which brooks millions of widows and millions of untouchables, a religion which discourages freethinking, is better to be buried five fathoms deep, than vainly glorified simply because for its antiquity. In fact, all religions which come under the above label, are bound to perish and *will* perish. There are freethinkers and rationalists to take care of Christianity, just as there are Kemal Pashas and Amanullahs to take care of Islam.

But what we require at this stage is a more neighbourly attention of our degrading situation. The economic degeneration of our country is, in our opinion, more due to our own shortsightedness to our doings than to the foreign domination. Wealth whether unused or misused, is an economic waste. Wealth whether carried away by others, or buried by ourselves, is not useful to us. A major part of our public wealth is both misused and unused.

Millions of our people live upon one coarse meal per day. Thousands are dying of starvation. Many hundreds are almost half-naked. Thousands of our children die for want of sufficient food and clothing. But the Sankaracharis and Madathipathis are rolling upon luxury and are wasting wealth on their overfed retinue. In addition to their huge property, they march from town to town, pitch their tents and exact large sums of charity from the people. Those who agitate for the enhancement of three pies in taxes and fight for greater services from the government, pay off unmurmuring hundreds of rupees to the robber chieftains and rest satisfied with their benedictions. These

chieftains who are supposed to be Sanyasins discarding all pleasures of the mundane world are leading a life not in any way less than that which is described by that facile novelist, in his *Mysteries of the Court of London*. All the pleasures that are even denied to princes on account of decency and decorum are enjoyed in full by these 'religious heads'. They play the real role of Sri Krishna who is metaphorically said to have indulged in sexual pleasure. Perhaps *their* acts are also metaphorical, we suppose! In that case, we fear the sufferings of the poor millions will also be treated as metaphorical! And there are the Brahmins who are also calling them Brahmins metaphorically!

When a portion of the cultured world is in favour of an equal distribution of wealth among the people, when the younger generations clamour for greater liberty and equality in all spheres of man's life, it is a harrowing spectacle to see that Government are allowing, in the name of that much advertised 'religious neutrality' a band of religious robber-chieftains to waste the public funds in the most unscrupulous ways. If the Government could only take some pains to recollect some of their past deeds, they will see that 'religious neutrality' did not forbid them from changing the criminal laws of that 'Inevitable Code of Manu'. Had they not changed those laws, we know how their administration would be looked upon by the advanced nations of the modern world. If the Government really feel any sympathy for the sufferings of the masses and if they are desirous of showing themselves off as humane administrators, (as they very often do) one of their foremost duties is simply to lend a helping hand to the exasperated masses and we will have done with these vultures of humanity.

- *Revolt*, 18 August 1929

3.3 Questioning Custom and Practice

Deepavali – A Drain

A few lines on this heading appears to be necessary as the festival is to come off early in the next week. We chanced to come across in a certain English weekly that the "national festivals are a source of great inspiration and knowledge", and hence people should "make them international and interreligious". It is a pity that this amusing remark should find a place in a journal intended for the modern youths instead of adorning the pages of the "Punch" or the "Tit-Bits". The writer has suggested a sure way for the attainment of knowledge. It is by celebrating festivals like *Vinayaka Chathurthi, Saraswathi Puja* and *Deepavali*. If we only follow his suggestion in the last case to its logical extremity, an attempt for a greater amount of knowledge will we fear, end in more smoke in India and more money to the manufacturers of explosives and fire works in the foreign countries. Then it is sure to become "international". It is the irony of Mother India that whereas other religions spend *their* money in establishing hospitals and schools for the use of the people belonging to *our* religion, Hinduism enjoins *its* followers to waste crores on smoke, in memory of the 'heroic' deed of one of its Trinities. And the protagonists of this religion have no shame in cringing the Government for bits of charity. …. The cross word puzzler wanted the name of a religion which deprived its people of health, wealth and intellect and yet was loved by them. We suggest Hinduism.

- *Revolt*, 27 October 1929

The Tyranny of Custom

(By Ritus)

Custom, age-long custom tyrannizes over woman more than over man. Woman has seldom the advantage of education and culture in India and feels fudgy when a new idea is introduced which may be quite reasonable and acceptable. In the matter of dress and toilette she is more radical than the most liberal of males. Stuffed with old-world ideas of duty, obedience and submission she is repulsed by anything original or which smacks of the modern. Hindu woman do not sit with their husbands at dinner. They think it a sin to mention their

husbands' names and feel it indecent to hold converse with them in the company of others. The idea of husband worship is centuries old. Every ceremonial occasion at home, in the temple or elsewhere needs the presence of the thread-wearing priest who is relentless in the collection of his tax.

The *sraddha* is a typical instance. However modern and up-to-date the man of the house may be, the mistress of the house holds sway in the performance of ceremonies and in the dispensing of charities. It would be ominous if a Brahmin does not make his appearance on the scene of every domestic occurrence. All this is due to the virus of the puranic stories learnt by women by hearsay or handed down to them traditionally. It is hard to convince them that they must change with the times. The departed do not hover in the air on the day of their anniversaries for their share of the sacrifices made by their heirs or successors on their behalf. The priest is for the nonce looked upon as a deity and the sacrifices are made to him as to a supernatural being. Ignorant men prostrate at his feet and beg that the offering made be accepted with grace.

What is called the "Ama Sraddham" where large quantities of rice are substituted for a sumptuous meal for the performer show not only the unthinking slave mentality of the offerer but the greed and selfishness of the puranic writer and follower. As the proverb goes, what is bred in the bone does not easily get out of the flesh.

The enormity of the sraddha is thus a heavy drain on the purse, slender or long, of every Hindu from his cradle to his cremation. The Brahmin is shrewd enough and he feeds Brahmins (does not give raw or unboiled rice). The stupid non-brahmin gives rice and every other food and curry stuff not merely to the officiating priest but to his family sufficient for a day or for weeks according to the means at the disposal of the giver.

Since 1911, when my dear mother passed away, I have, after a solemn prayer, offered food to my kith and kin and to poor and good souls on the anniversary days of my parent and am keeping it up, despite my too wise younger brother who with a tincture of English education blames me for not revering the memory of my blessed parent in the time honored way he is pursuing.

The selfish practices inculcated in the puranas are being repeated in all

vernacular readers lest they cease to be acted upon by coming generations. If Brahmins edit such readers, they seldom fail to describe with approval the customs and practices conducive to the interest of their class. Even readers published by the British firms in India contain arrant nonsense of the kind which is likely to perpetuate the slave mentality of the masses. Mr. Kincaird's Indian story books err egregiously in this respect.

All puranic and legendary lore which elevates the Brahmin and degrades others neither sifted nor refined but widely spread as if it were soul saving balm. I happened to read the series of Tamil readers published by the Teachers' Publishing House, Madras and found them no exception. The idea of superiority attached to birth has not yet left the best English educated Brahmin's mind, and he still believes and makes others believe that his word of anathema and the fire in his right palm will work ruinous miracles on the blasphemers who dare to call a spade a spade. The skin-deep western education and outward civilization have served only to weave tangled webs of sophistry and deception and to throw dust in the eyes of those who have something to give.

The heavenly sanctity and chastity of women is made ridiculous by Kamban in his description of the ravishment of Sita by Ravana by tearing up the earth on which she sat. Here the poet's high sense of Tamilian chastity has outrun his reason and discretion. Despite his knowledge of the Tamilian modes and rules of warfare, he blindly followed Valmiki condemning Ravana and he did so, simply because his epic should contain nothing derogatory to Rama and to Sita and nothing that would be a marked deviation form the original.

In this particular Valmiki's account is quite natural and in perfect keeping with the Aryan's self-importance, but Kamban's delicacy is inexcusable and unpardonable in the light of his knowledge of the Tamilian mode of punishing offenders and of the cruel retribution adjudged to Ravana as his due – to Ravana supremely wise (ten-headed), supremely valorous (twenty-armed), supremely musical (his *Yal* [*musical instrument – editors*] being his sign and motto), and supremely pious (his daily worship of Siva securing his longivity and his invincible sword).

The title *Ramayanam* is a misnomer: it ought to be *Ravanayanam* as Ravana is the real hero by whose side Rama's individual or personal

heroism dwindles into nothing and is most unbecoming in a professed ascetic helping out wanton trespassers in Ravana's realms. Can the tyranny of customary clan pride go further?

- *Revolt*, 2 January 1929

3.4 Hinduism?

Krishnaji on Hinduism

We reproduce the following paragraph from the writings of Mr. J. Krishnamurthi in the *New India*, which is reprinted in Miss. Mayo's "Slaves of the Gods" as a sort of an introduction to the book. This gives in a nutshell the characteristic features of the present day Hinduism. The writer's definition of caste, we hope, will serve as an eye opener to the Varnashramites of the type of Pandit Malaviya.

"We have a splendid spiritual heritage; but it has grown stale and profitless through the lack of the one thing which alone can keep any tradition fresh and profitable; and that is the spirit of real affection and consideration for others. The most potent survivals from our immemorial past are now what – crystallized cruelties and selfishness, infant marriage, the heartless restrictions which we place on widows, our treatment of women, generally the whole system of untouchablity, what are these but matters in which the dead weight of custom has crushed out of us the ordinary decent feelings which should sweeten and harmonize the life of human beings? And what is caste itself but a system of organized selfishness….These and many similar things are our heritage today; and it is under the weight of this heritage that we are groaning."

– *Revolt*, 30 June 1929

Well done Krishnaji!

We have been closely following the later developments of Mr. J. Krishnamurthi of the Theosophical Society. His recent speeches and writings show a fresher mind and a broader outlook. He goes at a more rapid space with the current of progress than before. He has realized that "Today is richer than yesterday, more full, more lovely but only the wise, the thoughtful, the free of heart, realise the beauty of that" He is looking upon life not in a way in which it was expected of him by his followers and admirers. We understand that he has announced the dissolution of the Theosophical Order of the Star of the East on the ground "that the interests of the world in Truth could not be roused by proseletysing through organisations". It is indeed a matter for gratification that he has made the timely announcement that truth cannot

be arrived at by organized associations or religions. He has begun to feel the greater importance of Truth than high sounding names of organizations. Whether the order of the East is permanently dissolved or not we are certain it would serve the purpose which it is intended to.

- *Revolt*, 11 August 1929

Order of the Star: Why Abolished?

Some light on Mr. J. Krishnamurthi's sudden decision to dissolve the Order of the Star of the East is thrown by the following passage in the last *Bulletin* of that Order.

"No religion, sect or society holds the Truth. The moment you organize thought, it becomes a religion and it is dead... . You are all so much concerned with the helping of another. It is a lovely thing… just to help another; but... your influence is tyrannous. You want every one to be of a particular kind and that is why you have all these religions, these acts of morality… Organizations purely for business and other necessities are essential; organizations for spiritual purposes, for increasing membership or systematizing thought, are of no value… Most men struggle in the search for truth and this struggle ends when they join a religious movement. What is essential is the understanding of life, and this one does not necessarily gain by joining a society… Most people seek comfort in an organization or church and hence their effort to understand life stops when they join a society… It is useless to try to establish order and harmony in the world through groups and organisations while the individuals themselves are chastic (*sic*), inharmonious and disturbed".

- *Revolt*, 18 August 1929

Religion in Danger?

Ever since the beginning of humanity whether it is from ape or stone, there must have been differences of opinion between man and man. And naturally there should have been as many opinions in the world as there were human beings. This generalization is not only applicable to the past, but it holds good even now. Differences of opinion, for the most part, exist not about points of fact, but always about the interpretations of the individual. For example, there is the un-common commodity commonly called common-sense which determines by

the perception of the senses, that a stone is a stone, and nothing else. Individuals may disagree as to the use of the material, and everyone has the liberty to hold a different opinion as to the use of the stone, until he is convinced of his error. But if the individual takes the liberty of calling a stone, something else, and if he sticks to it with a firm resolve, then he is generally called by his neighbours, a madman. If he invokes the help of god in his protest against the opinions of his neighbours he finds himself within the four walls of a dark room.

That is just the case that we are experiencing today in the so-called cultured world of the 20th century. Commonsense tells every man or woman that religion is not any commodity dropped from the high heavens. It tells that religion is merely a code of laws enacted by a certain community of human beings, for the purpose of leading a peaceful life in this mundane world. This is a point of fact which every school-boy knows, and a fact, over which differences of opinion ought not to exist, as far as people claim to be six-sensed animals. If under any circumstances, an individual disagrees as to the human origin of religion, he has set down either as a fool or as a hypocrite. Granting this then as an indisputable fact, religious differences and opinions spring from the respective capacities of the individual's understanding and interpretation. And Aristotle has wisely observed that "man is a warring animal." And the animal takes religion also as one of the reasons to war with his brother which itself goes to prove that the "All merciful God" could not have created so very diversifying religions, and thus set His own creations one against the other.

"'The cultured world", and especially our country which is world-famous for its "ancient enlightening civilization", raises a loud cry, of "religion in danger" in this advanced age. And there is an enormous waste of the precious time in the short span of human life, over this futile cry. Human energy has to be spent upon these irresponsible and havoc (sic) working elements, who cry "religion in danger". History tells us that many religions have died a premature death, and experience also tells us that many are dying little by little; which again goes to prove that religion is only man made. Other religions of the world except ours are rapidly changing to suit the present day culture and civilization. The speedy progress of humanity cannot be checked by means of any rigid commandments of religion. And the world has realized in recent years that religion is the opium of life. That is the reason why the tendency of the people is rather towards the abolition

of religions than rigid adherence to them.

The condition in India is however quite different. Here is a religion, whose name is not found in any of the so called religious books of the "Hindus" and whose sole credit lies in its undeterminable origin and time. But many of its followers say that the Vedas is the authority for their religion. The Vedas is again hypocritically said to be written in a language delivered by the Almighty Himself. It is supposed to be written in an unspoken dead language, which should be heard and read only by a divine-descended population of 3% of the "Hindus". 97% of the population are given the appellation of "Sudras," which means "either slaves or sons of Brahmins' concubines". If these "Sudras" make bold to read the Vedas, their tongues are to be cut off; if they hear the Vedas, their ears are to be filled with molten lead; if they keep any portion of the Vedas in their heart (?) their hearts are to be blown.

But happily under the present Raj, Max Mullers have defied the orders, and their tongues are safe! We can understand something if the Brahmins cry that "Hinduism is in danger". For it is an accepted fact that Hinduism is nothing but pure, unsullied Brahminism. All the definitions of Hinduism tell the same truth. And the actual working of the religion corroborates the statement. But what we fail to understand is the reasons for the Non-Brahmins' cry of "religion in danger." Let the Non Brahmins pause for a moment and think leisurely what is their position in Hinduism. Let them not blindly follow the footsteps of the "bhoosuras". Let them clearly understand what is the bedrock upon which Hinduism is built. It is also to be noted that all other minor religions in India, whether it is Saivaism, Vaishnavism, or any Ism, are the offshoots of Brahminism (Hinduism.) This is an irrefutable truth which can be justified by the non-existence of authoritative texts without the influence of Brahminism. And no one can deny that Brahminism is founded on Varanashrama Dharma, which has divided our people into four castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. The second and the third kinds are said to have disappeared before the "Kaliyuga" and the first and the last alone are said to exist now. The first is the face-born, and the last is the "feet born" The latter, in its turn, is again divided into thousands of sub-castes, each fighting for its superiority of birth. Thus we see that Varnashrama, the basis of Hinduism is the real cause of the multifarious divisions into which 97% of the population have been shattered.

Now we ask, whose religion is in danger? If the present day civilization

threatens Hinduism with destruction, what does it matter to those who are denied any privilege in the same religion? It has become the fashion of orthodoxy to raise the cry of "religion in danger," whenever any attempt is made to introduce reforms in society and our people also quite unwittingly join the chorus without knowing that they are bringing down ruin upon themselves. The "bhoosuras," raise this cry only when their interests are at stake. When it is a question of all people using temples, tanks, roads and other public resorts, or stopping all rites and ceremonials, or doing away with the caste system, then religion is certainly in danger. But on the other hand if it is a matter of the Brahmins sailing to foreign lands, or learning a "mlecha" tongue or sending girls to schools and colleges, or serving under a "heathen", then there is no danger for religion. It is only the fashion of the times.

We are pained to see that our people do not realize their situation. The "salt of the land" is notorious for its mud-slinging practices, and it has a glorious record behind it of having destroyed Buddhism in the land of its birth. It has a brilliant record of hypocrisy of having defeated the attempts of many social reformers in introducing innovations in religion and society. The slogan of "Religion in Danger" has stood them in good stead in their heartless endeavours. And we are sorry to note that history is repeating itself. Jainism, Buddhism, and other reformed religions received a severe blow at the hands of the Brahmins, for the mere fault of leveling up the Castes. It is enough if there is an aim at the destruction of Varanashrama. The ire of the face-born is roused, and there is the inevitable cry of "religion in danger". For, it is the only nourishment upon which Brahminism lives. When once it is destroyed, woe unto the 3%! That is the reason why caste has corroded even into Christianity in India. Evidently, there is the symptom of the beginning of its ruin also.

If India still allows itself to be carried away by the canine qualities of orthodoxy, there is no salvation in the near future. Unless we make use of the foreign Raj to establish a new order of things, conducive to the formation of a healthier society both mentally and physically, we are sure to be trodden underneath the iron heels of orthodoxy, when Swaraj, or the Raj of the "Suttee" and "impalement" comes into being. We desire to warn our people of the impending danger of lending ears to the cry of "religion in danger". Will the people wake up to this roguish rigmarole?

- *Revolt*, 22 May 1929

Hinduism Cannot Perish?

"However hard the Islamic and Christian Missionaries may strive, Hinduism will not die. For its philosophy gives it a unique place in the needs of the Human race" writes Hari Charan Muzumdar in *Prabhuddha Bharata*.

We wish to inform the writer that the 7 crores of Muslims and 50 lakhs of Christians in India have not been imported from Arabia and Jerusalem. We appreciate the robust optimism of the writer, but we cannot refrain from referring to the 7 crores of 'untouchables' who though included by our optimistic writer, among Hindus, do not enjoy any of the privileges that is ordinarily enjoyed by humanity. Hindu philosophy may have a unique place among the philosophies of other religion but, philosophy, in itself comes only when the stomach is full. A Hari Charan may be satisfied with Hindu philosophy, but it does not feed the millions of downtrodden brethren. It may be *unique* – but it does not prevent the obstacles that are responsible for the pitiful existence of millions of widowed sisters. The uniqueness of the Hindu philosophy may be a pastime for the Sanatanists and Vedantists, to be argued and debated upon, but it is of little worth to the toiling millions. Whereas the greatness of the philosophies of other religions lie in their absorption of greater strength, the greatness of Hindu philosophy lies in its assenine patience in *everything.* Without being content with the mere uniqueness of the philosophy let the writer

- *Revo*lt, 7 July 1929

"Kindness to Animals" in India

(By Mr. Bhagat Ram)

When we find that here in this country such customs as Sattee, female infanticide enforced widowhood, compulsory child marriages, Devadasi and untouchability have existed for centuries and been sanctioned and even enforced by the orthodox religious leaders; when hatred has been fostered between the higher and lower castes; then, amidst such conditions, what opportunity or hope is there of establishing a Society on firm footing to teach Kindness to Animals. From a long experience extending over 20 years, the writer blushes to confess that the public mind here is calloused, and instead of giving a sympathetic hearing, they more often than not ridicule the idea of showing any zeal in the

cause of saving animals from cruel treatment.

If we study Indian history, we find only one man, Asoka, the famous Buddhist King who because of his Buddhist religion showed great interest in this cause, and who established homes for old animals where they could live and die in peace. Except this great king we find no more such examples. Besides, we can find no institution here where one can keep an animal in its old age by making a small contribution, as a sort of pension after a life of hard work. The only sort of institution toward keeping animals we find here is the Gaushala. In such a land, where the cow is worshipped, one might expect to find the highest example of mercy and kindness to animals in the Gaushala. But alas! These institutions have rather a bad reputation in most places for cruel treatment of animals therein. If a Gaushala is made to accommodate 50 cows, it probably contains two hundred. Arrangements for watering and feeding the animals are often notoriously bad. Cleanliness is conspicuous by its absence. And the care-takers themselves usually consume a greater share of the money which the public gives toward keeping the animals, while the unfortunate animals eke out a miserable and pitiful existence until a merciful death frees them from such a fate.

If one goes through the bazaar in any city and notices the animals passing along, he will often see oxen with great sores on their necks from the heavy and often ill-fitting yokes. He will see poor weak donkeys, with their crooked age's skin, being cruelly beaten to further duration when they seem about to fall from hunger and exhaustion. He will often see oxen with their tails cruelly twisted until they are broken off in the middle. Such twisting is the common method here of driving the poor animals. Think of the torture they must gently endure. Have a more (sic) glance at the cow-hides of animals slaughtered here, and you will be fully convinced of how terrible cruelties were perpetrated upon them. The very appearance of the hides cut and torn in man's places will indicate the number of wounds that they had got on their backs, through cruel treatment by their heartless drivers.

Oftentimes, *Gauwallas* (native dairymen) secretly feed horse-dung to cows in order to get more milk. Another despicable practice is that of milching the female buffalo by a 'Phunka." Though here is a law against it, still the public remains apathetic. The bullock-carts are overloaded. The shopkeeper wants his stores brought cheaply, and do not care

what cruelty is shown to animals in bringing the stores to his shop. Yet this is a land which prized itself on its proverbial mercy.

It is a still more pitiful spectacle to find here and there some aged decrepit working animals turned out from their homes after a life of faithful service, to wander about on the streets finding food as best they can, eating filthy refuse and drinking sewage, until death in mercy releases them from such an existence. A man, who is so regardless of his co-working animal in its old age, cannot feel much compassion for distress of his own species.

Another common practice of cruelty is found in the custom of keeping parrots in the home. The parrot is named "Ganga Ram" and our people think that by calling the parrot by the name of "Ganga Ram," they are worshipping their gods more suitably. The poor parrot is kept in a cage for life, often hung in a smoky room, day and night; or exposed to the cruel extremities of weather.

Such daily scenes of cruelty and indifference to suffering cannot but reflect seriously upon the plastic minds of our children. We have no regular routine of teaching Kindness to Animals in schools, except an occasional story or two included in the Government Readers. Indian leaders know of such conditions and practices, but they have ordinarily remained apathetic. When have they ever lifted their voice against such cruelty to animals? When have they written books on this subject? When and where have they realized more fully their privilege and opportunity in connection with this cause of teaching Kindness to Animals? How sad it is to admit that from among so many leaders and saints, we found only one of them who occasionally gave some thought to the cause of animals. Perhaps the others feel that whatever was needed to be done, the enlightened Buddha and Mahavir did once for all, and noting needs to be done now by us.

Again, on the occasion of our great festivals (Dasssara and Dewali), thousands upon thousands of goats are sacrificed yearly, before the goddess, Kali, in the name of Hindu religion. Besides, many of our Jain brethren, who because of their religious teaching seem to be so zealous in their efforts to save even an ant or tiny bug from suffering, build wonderful places for themselves to enjoy, but they seldom give a though to providing a comfortable stall even for the cow whose milk they enjoy twice a day. Some of them buy an expensive cow, for say Rs.150 to supply milk to the household: but it is forced to live in filth

and drink from stinking drains along the road-side, so that after 3 or 4 months the cow is worth perhaps one-third of the original price. By this, one can imagine what condition prevails in the Gaushala where the management has not even concern which one naturally has for his own property to stimulate attention to the animal's plight.

Again, a common practice of charity which is often performed here as a religious duty, is that of taking a handful of *ata* (wheat flour) to throw somewhere along the road-side to feed the insects. When the insects gather to feed, they are crushed mostly beneath the feet of passers-by, or birds gather there to eat them.

In comparison to this, we find among our western brethren – whom the average Hindu once reproached as *Melaich* (cruel people), and from whose touch one often becomes unclean so that he must bathe before touching food – many splendid works of Mercy like the following:

There are many institutions and societies well established, in which many people are doing honorary service for the cause of Kindness to Animals. Thousands of papers and books are being published there to propagate this work. Many hospitals for animals are endowed through the generosity of wealthy patrons. Thousands of men give their old animals a pension, so that they may pass their old age in care and comfort. Laws are in force and are enforced, so that animals in a weak or wounded condition cannot be worked without punishment to the owners.

In 1910, Hon. Mrs. Charlton came out from England to work here (in India) for the cause of "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," and accomplished a great deal by her zeal and self-sacrificing work in this cause. She visited numerous hill stations, addressed many meetings, interviewed many leading persons and officials, and achieved some results by her noble efforts in the relief of poor hard working animals. One such result was to prevent tonga-horse from making double journeys in a single day on the hill roads.

In short, our people generally blinded by tradition and custom have become hardened to the cruelties practiced upon beasts of burden from constant association. An average European who sees an animal in wounded condition but still being cruelly toadied or beaten, will stop to protect; while an Indian passes by without noticing the cruel treatment. Further, when the public mind is so indifferent to such

suffering all around, what can one expect for the cause of poor Depressed Classes or for the uplift of Women? The prevention of cruelty to animals is not a popular cause here. Our Hindu leaders know this, and so they generally avoid the subject. Many persons to gain popularity follow blindly the ways of the convention leader; praising the old customs and superstitions, and scrupulously avoiding any mention of the evils prevalent today or the long-needed reforms which are now being pressed for certain classes and the women population.

The strangest thing is that charity in this land does not proceed, as a rule, on the basis of the work or cause, but the name of the leader who makes the appeal. Thus practical sympathy is created by appeal to religion, or caste, or relation, or motive to please the influential man who is making the appeal.

But, for all that, sympathetic hearts should not fail to do something that can be done. The cause is a sacred one. Every effort in its behalf is only a part of our moral duty to man and beast.

- *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

3.5 The Follies of Faith and Belief

A Bulletin

(By Agasthya)

Whereas a solitary Miss Mayo came from arose the seas and gave a fragmentary and wholly inadequate description of the ailments of Mother India,

Whereas such inadequate diagnosis and consequent indifferent treatment has led to an intensification of the disease and have increased the sufferings of the holy Mother,

Whereas the hold of orthodoxy has been thereby strengthened and the horrid "sacrifices" to Mother Kali have increased and embittered her,

Whereas the immoral Code of Manu is still enforced as the law of the land,

Whereas the obscene stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are still held up as moral precepts,

Whereas the enormities of the Puranas are still venerated and sanctified,

Whereas the intellectual growth of the people is dwarfed by primitive and superstitious teaching of the shastras,

Whereas Hindus celebrate the sanctity of the gods by providing them with wives, mistresses, alcoholic drinks and animal sacrifices,

Whereas abductions of women and adultery on the part of the gods are not only condoned but held up as praiseworthy conduct and advertised during festivals,

Whereas the inhumanity of the Saivaite "Saints" in causing the torture and impaling of Jains is approved of and commemorated every year,

Whereas idols made of stone, wood and metal are drawn through the streets in massive cars by thousands of men involving great loss of national time, energy and wealth,

Whereas such superstitions and revolting conduct is believed to conduce to better spiritual life leading to eternal bliss in heaven,

Whereas the millions are allowed to die of starvation while the few

overfed Brahmins are surfeited with luxurious food,

Whereas the sowcars impoverish the people by the practice of legalized usury but are able to obtain spiritual benefit for themselves by spending a portion of their ill gotten wealth in feeding the Brahmins,

Whereas the children of the land get emaciated owing to dearth of milk while potsful of all the available milk in the country are poured over the stone images and wasted,

Whereas the masses of the people are allowed to go illiterate and grovel in disease while national wealth is squandered in the building and consecration of temples, Vedapatasalas and choultries which function only for the benefit of the Brahmins,

Whereas the excreta of cattle are swallowed by human beings in the hope of acquiring religious sanctity,

Whereas innocent, chaste girls are dedicated to gods and forced to lead a life of shame and become a menace to the physical and moral wellbeing of young men visiting temples,

Whereas a large section of people are treated as untouchables and unseeables,

Whereas the "sacred books" embodying the teachings of religion are not permitted to be read by people belonging to that religion, and dire punishments, both while on earth and in heaven, are threatened for infringement of this injunction enforcing the bar sinister,

Whereas nationalism serves as but a mask for self-aggrandisement of people who aid the religious exploitation by the whiteman,

Be it therefore declared as the will of the spirit of humanity still inhabiting this diseased motherland that whether Miss Mayo come from abroad or not for diagnosing the ailments of the Mother, there shall arise hereafter thousands of the sons and daughters of the Mother herself, who will have not only the wisdom to effect a correct and complete diagnosis of the disease but will have the courage to administer the radical remedies which the gravity of the ailment demands. The physicians to come will not mock the Mother as Miss Mayo did but will soothe her. They will not exploit the Mother as the Nationalists do, but they will befriend her.

– *Revolt*, 23 January 1929

The Post Office

(By S. Guruswami)

Anything under the sun is often divided into two kinds. And so also the post office. The two kinds of post office are the material and the spiritual. About the material one, even the villager in our country has some idea. It sells postal cards, envelops stamps etc. receives and pays money orders, packets, telegrams etc. This huge organization everywhere, came into existence only after the coming of the British. Grey hairs and pandits of our land often take pride in tracing back all new inventions, to our "good-old days", and thereby draw a deep sigh of benevolent satisfaction. The existence of aero-planes even in the days of the Ramayana, is often proved by Indrajit's fighting from the clouds. They are patriotic in the sense that they attribute all new things to our forefathers, who were, as they proudly tell us, acquainted with everything under the sun. Not only the vernacular pandits, but some of the so called research scholars also. This is the last recourse these "patriotic" heads resort to when the moderner complains about the harm of religious education being given to young minds.

Now, let me give another fact which will be of much help to people of this kind. That is the post office. Post office existed in India thousands of years before, and is existing even to day, though in smaller numbers. The purpose of these post offices is to see that the manes of the departed are prosperously situated in their heavenly homes. One community only is allowed to have the hereditary monopoly over the profession of postmasters, and that is the face-born. The Director General is the Sankaracharya, and his power is unquestionable. The rules and regulations are contained in the Vedas and Smrithis, and the working of the postal system is embodied in the system of Varnashrama Dharma. This spiritual post office, has no permanent building anywhere. There is not any limit in the amount to be paid for the transactions. Telegrams, money orders, packages, and even heavy goods are carried thousands of miles in a terrible speed, all without the mediation of railways or aero-planes, or wires, or carts. The kusha grass (dharpa) with its stipulated length of six inches, does wonderful work even in this Kaliyug! When any individual is dead, the post master, unlike the material one, arrives voluntarily, with a bundle of the dried grass. This powerful grass, though found in plenty, on the banks of rivers and lakes, has a peculiar fascination for the armpit of the spiritual postmaster,

for only at his hands, can it effectively do the transacting business. The grass is mutilated and tied into knots, and then it becomes fit for the unique business.

First a single grass does the entire purpose of an *asanam* i.e. a seat for the performer of the obsequies. It carries to the homes of our departed, loads of rice, vegetables and cloth. Even liquids like oil, milk, curd, ghee, etc. are being carried carefully without being spilt. I ask, if the material post offices can do this? What a great heritage! At times, these post offices do what the ordinary ones cannot dream of. The 6 inches grass carries cows and calves to the high heavens. Sandals and umbrellas are safely delivered to our departed. But one thing that these spiritual post offices do not generally insist upon, is, they do not get acknowledgements from the recipients. This may be perhaps, due to the pressure of work. As regards the hours of business, transactions are made at any hour during day or night, but for the sake of people's convenience the business is generally transacted during day time. All the post masters (honour to them) work voluntarily and honourarily. They receive nothing for their hard work. Their diaries, often in the shape of palmyra leaves, and their panchangam, very often torn to an appreciable degree, are their office records. The chief machinery of this huge organisation, the *kusha* grass is not the result of any laborious invention, but the generous gift of Mother Nature.

We know the foreigners would envy us for this possession. For, whereas they devote their life time for a single invention, we Hindus work more wonders at the least expense of our energy. Ye, westerners, there is no use envying us. You cannot compete with us, for, you should know, we are guided by *bhoosuras*, who are directly born, even today, from the face of Brahma. They are not human beings like you, who are too much materialized. They are spiritual ones, eating spiritual food, sleeping spiritual sleep, and living a spiritual life. Their code of Manu has said, "three years of continuous *Kayatri Japa*, will lift a Brahmin in the air. Let the Air Minister in England take note of this. Our Brahamins will begin to fly all on a sudden, without his license, and there is going to be a fall in commerce by air. Let me also warn all the westerners of the impending loss. Meanwhile honour to the inventors of the *Dharpa*, and *honour* to the Face-born!!!.

- *Revolt*, 1 May 1929

The Camphor

(A Dialogue)

(By Miss. Gnanam)

(Mr. Thread and Mr. Threadless, two friends reading in the No-Use College, are returning from the temple. They talk of many things on the way, and suddenly the conversation takes a serious turn.)

Mr. Thread – That's stupid! I want no more of your communal abuses. You say that whatever evil exists in the country, is due to the Brahmins. It's simply absurd.

Mr. Threadless – Dear friend; no use losing your temper so soon. Whatever I say I have reasons to support. For example, you feel angry when I prove that the Brahmins are responsible for the evils of present day marriages. Now, let alone marriage: and take a smaller example, for instance, the use of camphor for worship.

Mr. Thread – (Subduing his anger and affecting a foolish smile) Eh! let me see how you prove this.

Mr. Threadless – My friend, so far as the pre-Sangam Tamil works are concerned, you should know there is no mention in any place of camphor having been used for worship. Perhaps in stray cases it might have been used for medicine. Even in later works, there is no rule specifically laid up, that camphor should be used for worship. And the Brahmins, I admit had the sole monopoly of education in those days.

Mr. Thread (interrupting), Ha! ha! Then – ?

Mr. Threadless – Don't laugh, my dear friend. Mine is only an assumption. But you should see whether there is the possibility or not. The Brahmins with their cunning, acted as brokers with the Chinese, perhaps, and promised them to make India a sure and big market for camphor, in return for a big sum of money for the work of negotiation. And you see, there is the inevitable religion for the Brahmins to be handled.

Mr. Thread – No, no; That's no good logic. Our community –

Mr. Threadless (interrupting), Yes, it is your community that has done this. Kindly hear what I say. Camphor was then introduced in religion, and made part and parcel of it. And the Non-Brahmins generally, you know, are still famous for their blind faith in religion. Naturally, China

had a large sale, and the Non-Brahmins paid, while the Brahmins enjoyed. And the result is, my friend, crores of rupees are drained in the name of god. Now, do you see how the Brahmins are responsible?

Mr. Thread (working himself up to a fury) – Nonsense! This is no proof at all. Your argument is bad, and your judgment is rash. It is simply ridiculous that you people have developed this sort of genius for finding fault with Brahmins for everything. Enough of your logic. It is time for me to catch the train. You see, tomorrow is Deepavali, and I have to be at my father-in-law's before daybreak. Let me have no more of your –

Mr. Threadless (interrupting) Ha! Here is another! (dragging him by the shirt) Only two minutes. You see Deepavali is another of the Brahminic evils. Letting alone the story and its harmful effects on us, do you know how the China crackers have found a place in the Deepavali festival?

Mr. Thread (sarcastically), Yes, Yes, by Brahmins. Is it not?

Mr. Threadless – Certainly! Not only the crackers, but every other luxury in the name of god and religion, is nothing but the creation of the selfish minded, ill intentioned, hypocritical brokers, the Brahmins. The sooner we get rid of –

Mr. Thread (interrupting and patting on his back) Dear friend, don't be so furious in your words. And do not generalise your statements. There are exceptions, you should know.

Mr. Threadless (subduing his angry tone) – Yes Sir, such exceptions, we never use the despicable word, "Brahmins". Goodbye!

Mr. Thread (with a fearful mien) Good by Sir!

- *Revolt*, 5 June 1929

Fun and Fact

(By Mr. Fountainpen)

Teacher: Balu, will you give an example to prove the cleverness in God's creation?

Boy: Sir, the mere fact that God has endowed humanity with saliva with the fore knowledge of its use for affixing stamps and pasting envelopes, shows how He had foreseen the coming of post offices.

★★★

Kanti: Dear Mr. Mileya, How is your South Indian tour? Successful – eh?

Mileya: Not at all, Sir, you gave a new Varnashrama, and I gave a new Temple entry: and both of us are condemned there.

Kanti: I see… Did you try Rama's name?

Mileya: Certainly, at Kottayam, It is the most tragic affair.

★★★

Englishman: Hello, Mr. Iyer! Are you quite safe? I suppose you are not very much affected by the S.R. agitation. Are you?

Iyer: Not so much Sir! Happily I have hired the Paval dog to bark upon my enemies. But I fear it will be enticed by shoes.

★★★

A Foreigner: (addressing a Muslim): What is that big crowd yonder in the river at this time of night?

Muslim: Sir, that is the assemblage of B.A.s, M.As, B.L.s, M.Ls, and L.Ts, who are preparing for their last bath for the Lunar eclipse.

Foreigner: (taking the Camera in his hand): Ha! Ha!! Here is a good scene for my Illustrated Weekly.

★★★

Match dealer: Alas! How is it the price of matches has suddenly gone down?

Press Reporter: Oh I see! It is because the Varnashramites have recently passed a resolution to boycott matches and produce fire from their own right hands. Woe to Japan! Woe to Sweden!!.

- *Revolt,* 5 June 1929

4 BRAHMINISM

4.1 Caste Privilege

Beware Brahmins!

Mymensingh July 27 – On the complaint of Kashirod Chandra Sil of Khulna, a barber by caste, who has been described in the judgment of the trial court as a missionary well versed in Sanskrit and Hindu "Shastras", a Brahmin of Sayna has been convicted to fifteen days' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs.100 and the two Muhamedans to three months' rigorous imprisonment each.

It is stated that Kashirod is striving for the betterment of his caste by establishing from the Shastras that it is equal in religious position to that of the Brahmins. In the course of his propaganda work in the district he delivered a speech at the house of a barber of Sayna, quoting "Slokas" and the "Shastras" to prove that the napits (barbers) had been the object of worship by the Brahmins. The accused Brahmin who was present at the meeting, became greatly annoyed at the audacity of the preacher and demonstrated his hatred of the sudras by striking his head with his own shoes citing the Vedas and swearing at the same time that he would never again countenance a napit (barber). Next day, when the complainant was going to another village on a lecture tour he was caught hold of by the two Mohammedans at the order of the Brahmin, to accompany them to Joyshodal to hold a discussion on the matter with the pundits there.

The napits of Kishoregunj has also passed a resolution for being invested with the sacred thread and hundreds of them have taken it already.

- *Revolt*, 4 August 1929

Destruction of Brahminism

Mr. Amritalal Majumdar writes in *The Epiphany*:

The Hindus are very old people, poor in health, and will soon be laid in the tomb. Hinduism, their religion, has struggled on indeed to our days; but as an invalid and dying thing. It has limited peoples lives, interfered with their thoughts, and persecuted harmless dissentients. It

is too outworn and ripe for destruction.

The Brahmins, their priests, have ruled India for centuries and made her one of the most reactionary countries in the world. Their vast influence over the minds of the people is incalculable. It cannot be dethroned by force. It can only be destroyed by the change of men's belief. It was the Brahmins who obliged the Aryans to introduce caste system in their society as a mark of submission. They are men born blind to the qualities that make peoples free and nations great.

The Hindus are negligent of simpler teaching of charity, service and brotherhood. They are therefore bitterly divided among themselves. All efforts to establish equality among them were frustrated by the opposition of the upper classes, who are still unwilling to surrender any privilege of their caste. The destruction of Brahminism is therefore the greatest event of our time. This immortal day will break the pride of the Brahmins and undeceive the Hindus, who regard them with undying veneration. It will do more to change their daily life and the structure of their society. It will also do more to change their opinion.

– *Revolt*, 23 June 1929

A Lecture

At Connolly Ceylonese Association a public meeting was held with Mr.Sarangapani, Editor, "Forward", Singapore in the chair on the 14th of October. Swami Adbuthananda spoke on the Tamils" Hindu Marriage, pointing out how Hindu Marriage in British Malayaa are becoming varied from the Tamilian Civilisation And explaining a series of Aryan deceptions. The lecturer pointed out that the theory and history of *Vivaha, Homa* and the practice of *Saptapadi* is contraception. He explained how men and women after solemnization of marriages as husbands and wives are deserted and therefore requested the Tamilian Hindu public to take necessary steps for putting a stop to this despicable practice. The next day with Mr. Mr. Thamby Iyah in the chair, the lecture was continued in the way of explaining the details of the unnecessary functions introduced by Brahmin priests and blindly observed by the rich and the poor, by the illiterate and the literate.

He then demonstrated his lantern show and showed the degrading conditions of unequal marriages solemnized by Brahmin priests and after the lantern show began answering some written questions handed over to him. He then quoted an instance from *Malay Mail* of a married

woman in Kula Lumpur who was enticed away and the decision of the Court holding the marriage invalid. All because the contracting parties who were by birth the Tamils, did not undergo the solemnization of the ceremony by a Brahmin priest, and deplored the instances of a very large percentage of marriages performed amongst clerks and laborers, which will have to become invalid if the decision of the Magistrate is left unmodified.

Finally he explained the necessity for the repeal of the sections of the Hindu Law regarding marriages and the obsequies in the interest of the domiciled Tamil Hindus and also said that an introduction of free certificates by the Register to the contracting parties of marriage and compulsory registration on the present scale of a fee of one dollar on the spot by having Honorary Registrars will be of immense help to the Tamil Hindus towards validity of their marriages, as they, by culture and culture of an independent Dravidian Civilization and other circumstances do not want to have Brahmin priests to solemnize or officiate their marriage ceremonies instead of doing them by one of their elders or other responsible persons.

- *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

4.2 Brahmana Rule?

The Travancore Government

We understand from reliable sources that the Travancore Government have proscribed the Urdu journal. "Kranti", which is published at Lahore. If what is reported is a fact we are sorry for the repressive attitude of the Government. The "Kranti", the organ of the Jat Pat Torak Mandal is doing yeoman's service in the sphere of social reconstruction. Its chief work, the breaking of caste distinction, by means of inter-caste marriages and inter dining is sure to be of immense benefit to the Hindu community. The mandal through its organ, is rendering such a great service to our caste-ridden country, that even the so called patriots with their brass throats, and the large amount of public funds, are not capable of doing a thousandth part of it. The mandal, in short, is achieving what the greatest of social reformers of the past failed to do.

The so called nationalists cry hoarse at the "intolerance" of the "satanic government". They want to establish Swaraj or the "Rama Raj," when, they say, the country will be overflowing with milk and honey and there will be nothing but peace and prosperity Indeed! We have an experience of what a "Swaraj" will be. The Travancore Government, which is undoubtedly ruled by a Native ruler is dancing to the tunes of the face-born class. In an article published elsewhere in this issue, the writer painfully refers to the Brahminised atmosphere in which the Government is getting suffocated. *Mitavadi,* the Tiyya organ of the West Coast paints a lamentable picture of the Brahminophobia with which the state is suffering. It really moves us to tears when the paper makes a touching reference to the inexplicable sufferings that the depressed communities undergo under the social and political Brahmins. Our heart breaks within us, when we read the moving words.

"The Royal house of Travencore who are now spending five lakh of rupees on feeding the Brahmins, have they given a day's meal to the saint Sri Narayana Guruswamy – born and bred up in their land? Have they taken the trouble to see him at least?"

Here in another instance of what a Swarajya would be. In Nepal, another of the Native States, we hear the Non-Brahmins ("Sudras") who drink milk in defiance of the dictates of Manu Dharma Shastra are still

punished. This is again another illustration of the Dharmarajya or Swaraj. There is no stop to the deafening cry of the patriots and their "leaders" that the Britisher is adopting many repressive measures in the administration of the country. But, they never have the leisure to consider in what aspects the native states like Travancore, have bettered the social conditions of their subjects. This denotes how the congress-wallahs are satisfied with anything that has the predominance of Brahminism.

Apart from the poison of Brahminism which the ruler of Travancore is forcing into the lifeblood of the subjects there is now issued (if again the report is true) a new order prohibiting "Kranti" from entering into the state. The journal, for the simple reason that it advocates the breaking of caste, is proscribed by the Government. What else, we ask, is this due to, then that the ruler has fallen a prey to the heartless machinations of the Brahmin advisers. Evidently the ruler of Travancore has caught a tartar! If the Government of Travancore continues to be led by the Brahmin element, if it has decided to overlook the millions of the depressed communities who form the backbone of the subjects, if it is stubborn in its blind support of the privileged classes, and if it resorts to such reprehensible methods of administration, we fear, it will soon pave the way of losing the goodwill of its people and stand itself as a monument unworthy of other advanced states of India. The Government, we hope, will wake up to its responsibilities, and make amends for what it has done till now.

- *Revolt*, 30 June 1929

Dharma Rajyam or Modern Travancore?

(Translated by 'Tiyya')

Mitavadi, the great Tiyya organ of the West Coast writes:-

In the presidential address delivered by Dr. Palpu at the S.N.D.P. Yogam at Kottayam he stated that in the old days in South India there reigned a great Buddhist Emperor (Mahabali); that the extent of that empire was several times greater than that of Asoka; that in the days of that reign there were no caste distinctions and differences; that such crimes as murders, cheating were practically unknown that in the policy of his Government no distinction was made as between subject and subject. It is the reign of this Emperor which we, (on the West Coat), celebrate

as the first onam (festival) in the month of Avany (*mid-August-mid-September – editors*), at the beginning of every Kollam year. It will be interesting to compare the policy of that historic empire and the Governmental policy of modern Travancore.

Even today Travancore is Dharma rajyam. But Dharma rajyam has come to mean the country which feeds and maintains the Brahmin. Whatever be the change in status and position of the Brahmin today and whatever be his condition and circumstance in life, for the purpose of feeding them gratis and at Government expense, ottupurahs or feeding houses have been opened throughout the state. In these ottupurahs or feeding houses Governmental charity does not extend to feeding members of other communities however destitute and miserable their condition might really be. Christians, Nairs and Tiyyas are the most important and populous communities in the State. Even to the Tiyya Guru the Government choultry is closed. Nor have any of the above three communities the right of entry into these ottupurahs or feeding houses.

There are several Government temples in Travancore and several lakhs of rupees spent on these temples are for satisfying the needs of the Brahmin. Granting that rice corry and sweets are offered to the gods for appeasing their hunger and granting that the Gods seemingly partake of them, what we now come to know is that it is the Brahmin who takes back every thing that is so offered and without finding any dimunition in the quantity of it and what is more, himself consumes it after all. The Government have no sympathy with the other communities. The right to walk along the public roads is denied to them. Entry into God's temples is allowed only to the higher castes. If others approach these temples they are beaten and cast out. The shadow of the depressed classes brings about pollution and so saying the Brahmin runs away from the temples forsaking their Gods. Even in the temple or Dewaswom department run by the Government neither the Christian nor the Pulaya nor the Tiyya can ever hope to obtain a footing.

When one class of subjects of the State drive away another class from the public roads by merely shouting "Hol", the Government make no question of it. The Government further seek to perpetuate these things on the ground of custom and ancient usage. The Travancore Government has filled all the departments of Public Service with caste Hindus. Money which is impartially collected from all people without

distinction of caste or religion, now reaches without pollution the pockets, almirahs and iron safes of caste Hindu Government Officers. When non caste Hindus implore the Government with uplifted hands, like beggars, "Give us something in the Public Services," the Government excuses itself saying: "You are not educated and therefore we cannot give you anything in Government service." The excuse that there are no educated members in these communities is now absolutely false. If true then as everybody knows, it was because Government did not give them admission to schools in the state.

What is the good of saying there are 12 lakhs of Christians and 7 lakhs of Tiyyas in the State and so on and so forth? It is quite certain that the attitude of the powers that be, in Travancore, is not that of Mahabali the famous Buddhist Emperor of South India. There is an old proverb which says that what the Polaya has earned by begging the Pariah is eating. Similarly it has been ordained that by the sweat of their brow non caste Hindus should earn and the caste Hindus should spend it in comfort upon themselves.

In the ensuing month of Kartigai (*mid-November-mid-December – editors*), there is the Murajapam ceremony in Travancore. Some five or six lakhs of rupees will be spent by the government on the Brahmins in feeding them, in bathing them and in clothing them. As a special officer for supervising the whole thing a Brahmin only is appointed; preparations on a granted scale are already set afoot; Mangoes are being pickled; medicated and scented oils are being got ready. Everything is being carried out in splendid style. Is it for burning away in such a way five or six lakhs of rupees! – that the people of the State are to pay their taxes? What shall we say about this extravagance except that it is terrible?

Have the members of the Royal house of Travancore who are now spending five lakhs of rupees on feeding the Brahmin, have they given a day's meal to the saint Sri Narayana Guruswami born and bred up in their land? Have they taken the trouble to have seen him at least? We really doubt very much, whether Maharajahs and Maharanis in attempting to reach Heaven and in seeking paradise at other's expense would find any bliss whatever in the other world. What shall we call this sort of Government? Our slave mentality has taught us to extol all such Governments as something admirable – all such Governments which do not actually hunt down their subject like wild beasts. If only we would sing the praises of such Governments, we would in turn be certified as intelligent beings by the caste Hindus.

It is only a few days ago, a Brahmin has been appointed Dewan of Travancore. And another Brahmin has now been appointed Chief Justice of Travancore. The Travancore Dewaswom Commissioner is a Brahmin. The Chief Engineer is a Brahmin. The Director of Public Instruction is a Brahmin. It is not because equally able men were wanting in other communities that such an arrangement has been made. These things take place because of foolish superstition and a blind faith in the Brahmin. Favoured communities manage to secure coveted positions and places and feasts. Others are being kicked out. Whether such other communities can even be admitted into Government schools has not yet been finally settled. But the Travancoreans are always ready to present Addresses and kow-tow on bended knees when Dewans of such Governments either retire or are newly appointed.

In any event, the governance of Travancore today is not exactly that of Mahabali (the Buddhist Emperor).

Conferences of Ezhavas in the S.N.D.P. Yogam and Conferences of Nairs and others are being celebrated in Travancore with very great splendour. Has a single Maha Rajah or Maha Rani ever evinced any anxiety to see for themselves what their subjects are doing in these Conferences? What stands in the way of these Maha Rajahs and Maha Ranis now and then having a look in at these Conferences of their own subjects who pay for their Calcutta trip; their Ooty sojourn; their Badradipam and their Pujas to this, that and the other? They never care to do any such thing. Their personal requirements must be satisfied: their bodily comforts must be looked after; their power and prestige must be maintained. If their subjects want to approach their ruler, then they must wait on the road side at the time of the royal drive, to get a glimpse. There is no other access to their rulers. And now after the introduction of motor cars for their drives the only way in which their ordinary subjects can have any idea of their rulers is by having good look at their portraits.

– *Revolt*, 30 June 1929

Brahmin-ridden Travancore

Doth then the world go thus, doth all thus move?

Is this the justice which on earth we find?

Is this that firm decree which all that bind?

Are those your influences, Powers above?

– W. Drummond

The Travancore Government, it is authoritatively stated, has banned *the Kranti*, the Urdu organ of the Jat Pat Torak Mandal of Lahore. We have had occasion to show in these columns how the ruler of Travancore has given the reins of the Government entirely in the hands of the monopolists, how the vulture of Brahminism has been allowed free to prey upon the millions of the poor downtrodden communities and how the ruler is willingly suppressing the majority of the citizens both socially and politically.

So far as the appointments in the Government services are concerned, from the Dewan to the school teacher, from the Chief Justice to the body guard, the ruler has evinced a peculiar liking for the face-born and has filled almost all the offices with that class of humanity. The ruler finds himself, or to be more correct, the regent finds herself, in a bed of roses, in the present atmosphere of Brahmanism in which she is surrounded. The whole administration has been sold, as it were to a class of people, who are solely responsible for the existing illiteracy of the 97 percent of the population in India. If the regent had only an iota of commiseration, sparkle of sympathy for the millions of her citizens on whose taxes she maintains herself and her large body of Brahmin retinue, if she had only devoted a solitary minute amidst her jovial hours to think patiently about the probable evils of a Brahminised administration she would not have jumped with her eyes open, into such a whirlpool of unpalatable orthodoxy.

Then, as regards the social aspect of the administration, it is most 'abominable, unutterable and worse'. In no parts of the country, we may boldly assert, are such cruelties perpetrated in the name of god and religion as in Malabar, especially in Travancore. The Travancore Government in collaboration with the Brahmin Dewan, not to mention their Brahmin satellites, has banned a journal for no other fault except its advocacy of the breaking of caste. Verily, this might be the natural outcome of the interview with the regent, of the North Indian tiger (*Pandit Malaviya –editors*) which recently disappeared from us, after having performed its Shastraic acrobats. Evidently the Travancore Government has a serious attack of Brahminophobia and it is no surprise the diseased man dreads the sight of the injecting needle. *The Kranti* has terribly frightened the Sanatanic or omitting the two letters,

the 'Satanic' Government an attribute which the 'patriots' are so fond of using. We doubt whether the regent has been hypnotized by the 'holy' touch of the Brahmins hands. We fear the Government has pitifully fallen a prey to the machinations and empty vapourings of the tiger of the Hindu Maha Sabha during its recent visit to Travancore.

Is this, we want to know, the type of Swaraj that the All India Congress is striving to usher in? Is it to get this kind of Swaraj that crores of rupees are being spent every year? Lastly we ask, is this the kind of Raj that Mr. Gandhi has in view? Oh! No! It is terrible! "Better to serve in heaven than to rule in hell". For our part, we have not developed that spirit of unadulterated independence which cries, "better to rule in hell, than serve in heaven" We have not cultivated such an uncontaminated patriotism as to be satisfied with ruling in hell. For 'inefficient' as we are, we have been given enough of opportunities to compare side by side a "'satanic" government with a Swaraj government. We are foreseeing, thanks to the Travancore Government, the conditions in which the Non-Brahmins will be placed, under a Swaraj Government. Our opponents may cite the example of such advanced states as Baroda and Mysore, and yet there is nothing worth admiration except that they are a little better of the two.

The Dewan of Travancore who comes from the intelligentsia seems to be unaware of the potentialities that lie hidden for the nonce in the millions of his subjects, whose social advancement, he is bold enough to set at naught. By the strength of the Brahmin officials whom he has endowed with the main levers of administration, the Dewan may be entertaining hopes of suppressing the people under his iron heels. He may be dreaming of putting down with force the new spirit which has risen in the country. He may resort to oppressive methods of curtailing the yearnings of his people, by banning such humanitarian journals as the *Kranti*. But let him not forget that he is adding fuel to the fire. His subjects are sleeping volcanoes which may at any moment, suddenly come to life and spit forth their burning lava and fire and brimstone. The hundreds of depressed communities who are treated as social lepers, are tired, most pitifully tired of the thousand iniquities which are perpetrated in utter defiance of humanity and justice. They are refused the very common privileges that are accorded even to pigs and other nasty beings of the animal kingdom. They are humiliated in thousand and one ways; they are not admitted to use the common

roads, tanks, temples and other public places. Lakhs of rupees are being spent in feeding the overfed Brahmins (both official and non-official, with all their paraphernalia of wives and children) but not a morsel of food to the toiling Ezhava or the suffering Pulaya. The 'Brahmin cobras' are fed by the Government with the food of the people themselves. That is merely improving the poison of the cobras to enable them to bite the innocent millions of the land. The Dewan is adding insult to injury by banning the *Kranti*. That shows he is deliberately intent upon wounding the exasperated feelings of those who are already wallowing in the filth of social degradation and political subjugation. The administration of a Sanatanist cannot be anything else than a declared support to the monopolist community in both social and political spheres. Evidently the Dewan and his colleagues, supported by the lower rungs of the official ladder, have made up their mind to suck as much as possible, even the whole of the blood of the poor innocent owners of the soil. We have to painfully refer to the fact that, in all the aspects of administration, the Dewan is rubbing the sore, instead of healing the wound.

As one who had freely mingled with the depressed classes at Vaikom, we are fully conscious of the capacity of our down-trodden brethren, who are thanks to the untiring efforts of the newspapers, like the *Mitavad*i and the *Sahodaran* thoroughly cognizant of the evils of caste system. We also remember, how at Vaikom in spite of the repressive methods adopted by the Government the downtrodden brethren enthusiastically co-operated with us and fought to the finish. That great victory at Vaikom, we hope, will serve as an impetus to the future fight for equality, which the Dewan is deliberately forcing the people into. Let the victory at Vaikom,

Put a tongue

In every wound of Caesar that should move

The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

- *Revolt*, 14 July 1929

The Dewan of Travancore

(S. K. NAIR)

The very first act of Mr. V. S. Subramanian Ayer, the newly appointed Dewan of Travancore, was to remove all the non-Brahmin officials and

servants from Bhaktivilas, the official residence of the Dewan and install in their stead Brahmin officials and servants. Does not this show his "magnanimity"? Does this not show his Catholic spirit? Does this not prove him above caste? If this be the first act immediately after his appointment our readers can well judge as to the acts he will do in the Huzur Cutchery. He is the identical man who proscribed 'Kranti' of Lahore for its outspoken remarks and observations on caste. Let me now come to the humorous side of the Dewan. On the day of his appointment the officials both Europeans and Indians assembled in Bhaktivilas to congratulate him on his appointment as the Dewan of Travancore. The distribution of pansupari and sandal was entrusted to Secretaries, all Brahmins. They without any taste went on pouring sandal on the shirt sleeves of the European officers till they were driven to a spirit of annoyance. What more things are in store for Travancore at the hands of the new Dewan remains to be seen. Anyhow there is no doubt that this would be the result if a High Court Vakil with no practical knowledge of executive administration be appointed to such an exalted place. I am afraid the story will not end here. Already the people of Travancore, Nairs, Thiyyas and Christians are preparing a big memorial to be presented to His Excellency the Viceroy during his coming visit to Travancore in the month of December.

- *Revolt*, 4 August 1929

Why this Difference?

The Travancore Government is recently adopting queer methods of administration of Justice. The Travancore Temples which refused admission (at Suchindram, Cape Comarin and Trivandrum) for Lalaji and Mahatmaji for the reason that they have undertaking sea-voyage, have opened their portals to the sanctified feet of Sriman Srinivasa Iyengar. We warn the Government that this kind of differentiation is highly humiliating to a large majority of the people, and that if this is repeated, the citizens of Travancore may at any moment bring matters to a crisis.

- *Revolt*, 1 September 1929

4.3 Fighting Brahminical Privilege

The Question of Temple Entry

We understand that in pursuance of the resolutions passed by the Erode Devasthanam Committee (*an official committee that presided over temple affairs – editors*); some people of the depressed classes went to worship god in the Siva temple on Thursday the 4th instant. It seems the priest of the temple closed the doors and went away immediately. The worshippers then are said to have sat down throughout the night with the hope of worshipping god. The doors were not opened till morning. When the worshippers went out, the outer doors of the two temples were also shut. The worshipers are said to feel their disappointment very keenly and the citizens are up against the high-handed action of the temple priest. The Devasthanam Committee, we hope will be true to its resolutions and not allow their servant to rule over his master. On our part we will be only too glad if all the temples are closed for ever so that the energy of our people might be utilized for better purposes of serving humanity. But if at all the temples are to be opened for public worship, it should be opened for all including the depressed classes. We emphatically assert that these caste manufacturing machines should be immediately attended to by the reformers. Or else they would work unredeemable havoc to the country. We shall wait and see the decisions of the Devasthanam Committee.

- *Revolt*, 10 April 1929

Sequel to Temple Entry

Arrest at Erode

As a result of the temple entry at Erode on the 4th instant, in pursuance of the Devasthanam Committe's resolution, Mr. Easwaran and two others belonging to the depressed classes, Messrs. Pasupathi and Karuppan were arrested by the police on the 18th under under section 295, 297, and 169 IPC for alleged trespass, defilement and abetment. The case is being tried before the 2nd class Magistrate. Mr. K.C. Subramanian, Bar at Law, Nagapatam, has appeared for the accused.

- *Revolt*, 24 April 1929

Erode Temple Entry Case: Judgement Delivered

In the famous Erode Temple-entry case which began about 9 months back, the judgment has been delivered on the 22nd by the 2nd Class Stationery Sub-magistrate, Erode, that Messrs. Eswaran, Pasupathi and Karuppan are punished under Sections 295 and 297 P.C., with a fine of Rs. 60 each or in default, to undergo a rigorous imprisonment of 2 months. The 2nd and 3rd accused has paid the said fine, whereas the first accused, Mr. Eswaran refused to pay and has cheerfully courted Imprisonment

- *Revolt*, 19 January 1930

Temple Entry in the Tamil Country

(K.M. Balasubramaniam, B.A.)

The auspicious dawn of the Twentieth century rang the death knell of the "Stasis" India and India has fast become dynamic. The golden age of enlightened renaissance has been ushered in and old and worn-out ideas and habits have fast fallen into decay and have been replaced by fresher ideals and finer modes of life. All of us, the sons of Mother India wished, nay strongly willed to set our country moving and moving by leaps and bounds towards the cherished goal of Self-Government. And blindness itself dares not doubt the possibility of its realization in the near future. Pilot after pilot all of them stout-minded, immaculate and spotless patriots stood at the helm of the political India and many a mighty storm of merciless repression and persecution have been steered clear of most successfully.

A Pandit Motilal is now at the head and happy would be our lot to rally round his banner and rush to the field. His and our demand is Dominion Status for India. "Indeed" exclaims the Jingoist John "that's too much for the money; Pray wait for a while." But the Panditji and the patriotic Indians as well are mightily enraged at this insult and injustice. The Indians are taunted and trodden down. We must have our liberty our birthright; our inalienable right at any cost and nay at the cost of our lives.

Meanwhile the Hindus who of course constitute the majority of the Indians, are not oblivious to their social and socio-religious

advancement. We must keep abreast of the political advancement, in the social field as well. But who is to wake up the intoxicated bigots of our ancient faith who have drunk deep into the poisonous fountain of orthodoxy? Who is to eradicate the inequalities and injustices that mark, nay mar our Faith, and improve our Status? Why, there is that unflinching advocate of the Hindus and Hinduism and the honoured High Priest of the Hindu Maha Sabha who is heart and soul engaged in the holy duty of reinfusing his co-religionists with new life and vigour? The depressed classes, the so called untouchables whose intolerable condition amidst constitute a blot on the fair page of our society. Pandit Malaviyaji is determined to raise and ameliorate. While Pandit Motilal is demanding "Dominion Status" for our country, an enviable status no doubt, our Pandit Malaviya is demanding a Human Status or a 'Tolerable Status' for the untouchables who form the backbone of the Hindus and who number sixty two millions. His sincerity is clearly above cavil and his efforts are indeed unceasing. But I wish the Panditji abrogated his ill chosen methods and adopted better ones in the place!

It is a thousand pities that even Pandit Malaviya has not succeeded in shedding his old and antiquated opinions and boldly face the present day realities. He is still ridiculously hugging his 'Vedas', and 'Agamas' to his shoulders and slavishly searching their moth-eaten leaves for a sanction to do this and that. His conference with the Pandits of the Parishad and his eruditious discussion and debates and what is worse and more ludicrous his obvious yielding to those obscurantists, provoke laughter and mirth. He has not yet quite realized that such academic discussions are of absolutely no avail. None but those grandiose Achariars ever give a thought to those Vedic sanctions and 'Dayas and 'Vishayams'. The Panditji carried the battle into the enemies' camp and got severely defeated. The 'devil cites scripture for its purpose' is an adage our Panditji seems not to have benefited by.

The Tamil country should, however, beware of lending their ears to these puffings of these Parishad Pandits. We the Tamils are a glorious race of magnificent Temple builders and it does not lie in the mouth of a few obscurantist Pandits to quote scriptures from the Vedas and Agamas and refuse entry to the millions of our co-religionists. Let the Tamil world remember that our ancient society was essentially democratic in the real sense of the term. We had no such rigid and rigorous caste systems as in the North and the division of the Society into Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra was wholly foreign to the Southern

Dravidian. The *Tholkapiam's* fourth class (*the reference is to the four classes of humanity in this ancient Tamil grammar – editors*) can never be indentified with the "Sudras" of the Vedic Division. *Tholkapiam* has not a word in reference to Manu's compound castes. Hence untouchability is purely a foreign weed that was sedulously imported and sown amidst the healthy plants of such a society, as ours which had in the words of Mr. Manicka Naicker, "but a transmutable, plastic and barrier-less professional distinction". This poisonous weed had become deep-rooted in our soil and has been for long, too long working havoc amidst us. It must at any cost now at least be blotted out root and branch, the vociferous roarings of the Varanashramites notwithstanding.

The whole of the Tamilland is studded with stupendous temples throughout its length and breadth which are marvels of architecture. All these were built by the Tamil monarchs. It was only after the advent of the Aryans that a class of untouchables were created and forbidden entry into these temples. Prior to that we learn from such works as *Pattinappalai* that a temple was known as 'Ambalam' which literally means a public place, Hence we have the appellation of 'Ponnambalam' by which the temple at Chidambaram has been known from time immemorial. Tradition itself asserts that the God therein used to be worshipped by every religionist.

Again as an argument for allowing the Adi-dravidas into temples, the classical instance of St. Nandanar is cited. Though *per se* it is a conclusive proof for it, yet the Parishad Pandits refuted it by saying that Nandanar had to be purified by fire before entering the Temple. Now granting this, what process of purification we ask, had that untouchable lutanist Thiruneelakanta Thirupanar, who accompanied the Brahman Saint Sambandhar even into the Sanctum Sanctorum of all the temples, had to undergo? What process again did the Thiruppan Alwar of Uraiyur (*also a so-called untouchable saint – editors*) undergo before he was ordered by Vishnu to be brought into His Holy shrine at Srirangam?

Now, whether or not the scriptures enjoin us to admit the untouchables into the temples (and speaking for the Tamilians I do strongly hold that there is not a single word in the whole range of Tamil literature forbidding their entry) it is high time to cast them to the wind and set about seriously consolidating our society by granting the just wishes of our fellow religionists. In this connection, I must confess to a feeling of unmixed horror and indignation at the fact that it is the Non Brahmins

that prove to be most inveterate and unbending opponents to this enlightened movement. They must be entirely ashamed of this sinful and suicidal deed. I can quite understand if a monopolist were to oppose it. But I am simply scandalized to see opposition emanate from a Non-brahmin. Verily the 'slave mentality' has become too much deep rooted in our breasts: and nothing can be a better tribute to the machination and ingenuity of the priestly class than that they are able to remain at the background and ignite the sparks of oppositions in the Non Brahmins themselves. It is to this incurable disease of self extinction that the efficacious panacea of Self respect ought to be administered. If really these people mean what they say when they heap up imprecations and abuses on the Self-respectors and their Atheistic propensities, if they indeed care anything for their cherished faith and celestial God in the name of that very Omnipresent, All Love, and All merciful Being for whose sake and at whose altar they are prepared to sacrifice their lives, I most humbly implore them to save that religion and serve that God by suffering sixty two millions of down trodden Hindus to partake of His worship along with themselves. Humanity dictates admission to them and religion itself proclaims equality amongst all. If not, Christianity is ready with its golden portals wide open and promising privilege on earth and bliss in heaven" and small wonder if your rank and file becomes lean and the former's swelled. Then would the Hindus "*Rot inwardly and foul contagion spread, Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw /Daily devours apace and nothing said.*"

– *Revolt,* 30 June 1929

Easy Solutions

(By Ritus)

Much fuss is being made of temple entry. The so called high castes stand in the way of their brethren of the down-trodden classes entering Hindu temples while they boast of the Non-Brahmin majority, if we let alone minority section of Brahmins out of account (sic). Let the Non-brahmins who enter temples and those who are forbidden to get into their precincts make it a point to pay no fees or perquisites to the pujaris. The pujaris will resign their duties, seeing the lucrative profession or occupation gone and turn to do other paying jobs. The

grand temples will be left to the worshippers, who can't have direct worship without the intermediary or *tarakan* between them and God. Or let the downtrodden classes, the rank and file, enter the temples at once and capture the right of temple worship for themselves. When one man is killed, it is murder, but when thousands are slain, it is an honour to the general. The rulers will all go by the opinion of the majority and the claim put forward by the so-called high castes was at one time, enjoyed by the feet-born too, and became absolutely their own, when the latter lost their union and influence on account of the illiteracy brought about by the peculiar unfavourable political circumstances. Our benign government is now in a frame of mind to help to lift up the unfortunates known as the Adi-Dravidas in every possible way.

Interdining and intermarriage loom large in the public attention. Acquisition of wealth will accomplish more than any numbers of harangues on public platforms. The sub-sections are already vanishing before the blaze of wealth. At one time faith shattered the citadels of caste, and St. Jnana Sambhandar and St. Appar halted together and the former enjoyed the hospitality of Nila Kanda Yalpanar and the latter of the Brahmin of Brahmins, the great Apputhi Nayanar (*a Saivite saint, one of the famed 63 devotees of Shiva – editor*s). Let our unfortunate brethren learn and make their fortunes and the castes will vanish into thin air. Education and wealth will make interdining and intermarriage easily feasible. The cosmopolitan dinners have become common and the cosmopolitan marriages have begun their rapid race. To have both *fait accompli* in no time, let the downtrodden make up their mind to abjure all service to those higher up in the scale unless they interdine and intermarry. The downtrodden are the hard labourers in the field, and can achieve their end easily as the men of the higher classes can turn no furrow or raise no food grains themselves.

The anniversary of the dead kindred celebrated or solemnized with a Brahmin Guru is being replaced by the celebration with a Gurukkal, who is but a replica of the Brahmin. The anniversary can be conducted by our fellowmen with prayers to the dead followed by a sumptuous repast, or dinner. The chief idea is the remembrance of the beloved dead. Much expense in the way of gifts can be cut down as supernumeraries.

The introduction of the communal headmen or elders for the

solemnization of marriages is a step in the right direction, and the orthodox stick up to the Brahmin for the purpose, because long standing customs die hard with them. Many families are ruined by expensive marriages. Considerable reduction in expenses is a desideratum. It is a good sign of the times that most marriages are reduced to single days and it would be better that they terminate with a single feast.

Is Religion in danger? No. The hypocrisy of religion is in danger. The pillage in the name of God is in danger. The deception practiced in the name of Religion is in danger. The danger point will be reached only when the ignorant high castes come to know what religion is and how they have been duped for centuries, and also when the ignorant masses are taught what true religion is and realize the impositions of priests and Brahmin pujaris. Once again the remedy lies in the spread of education, primary and secondary, for which public money should be utilized more than for college education and university establishments.

The heads of mutts are the feeders of howlers of 'religion in danger.' They must be made to realize their ignorance and their misuse of their religious trusts. An easy way in which the heads of mutt can be brought to sense is to organize meetings of worshippers wherever the mutts own property and to persuade them to keep in abeyance the *Kattukutthakais* (*tenancy rates to be paid on land owned by religious institutions – editors*) left to mutts till the *madathipathis* discharge their functions legitimately. This may seem an impossible feat. But it is easily done provided a brand of zealous workers start on the crusade. Let suits be filed for the recovery of the rents due. Let the Brahmin vakils be their advocates and judges. Only fully let the defendants make the plea that they are worshippers and disciples of mutts and that, as such they have a right to see that the trust is not disgracefully abused for which they keep back the rents. The charity commissioners – what have they done till now with the mutts? Will they take the trouble of publishing and thereby making the people know all about the budgets of mutts hitherto submitted to them? Let them realize that in their honesty and diligence lies the reformation or the purgation of the Augean stables of mutts.

– *Revolt*, 21 July 1929

The Right of Temple Entry (1)

(By P. Chidambaram Pillai, B.A., B.L.)

It is admitted, though, no doubt for a limited purpose, by no less a person than Mr. P. R. Ganapathy Aiyar of the Dharma Rakshana Sabha of Madras, that Hindu temples are "Cosmopolitan". To use his own words, "Unlike Christian places of worship and English Churches, which are mostly parochial chapels in which parishioners alone can claim as of right to worship, while it appears also their duty to attend, *temples of Hindus are like their religion more Cosmopolitan".* No doubt, the learned Brahmin Gentleman concluded a bit lamely, out of tune with the high-sounding word "Cosmopolitan" employed by him. "Primo facie" said the Cosmopolitan Brahmin lawyer, "all Hindus belonging to *the four castes without exception* are entitled as of right to worship in Hindu temples". That is Cosmopolitanism with a vengeance. More about this, later.

Hindu temples are, according to Sir. T. Muthuswamy Aiyar, the first Indian Judge of the High Court of Madras, "religious institutions founded, endowed and maintained for the benefit of those sections of the Hindu Community who conform to certain recognized usages as those of the castes for whose benefit the temples are by immemorial usage dedicated as places of worship." It looks a bit involved and it is apparently difficult to make out what the learned judge means by it. He is clearer when he says, in another place "Hindu temples were neither founded nor are kept up for the benefit of Mahomedans, outcastes and others who are outside the scope of it".

Before we proceed to examine this observation, let us know something about him as a Judge.

"It used to be said" writes an admirer of his in a Law publication "that when Sir T. Muthuswamy Aiyer confirmed any death sentence, he would make Prayaschitam on going home. In a criminal case, he had to impose a fine of Rs. 200 on his spiritual Guru. The judge on going home wrote an apologetic letter to the Guru enclosing the Rs. 200. Such was his conception of his duty as a pious Hindu, a conscientious Judge and devoted disciple".

In having to administer law, according to 'Justice, equity and good conscience', this eminent Brahmin Judge of the High Court of Madras, felt on those occasion when upon his decision the fate of a human

being was settled, that he had transgressed his religious commandments, and freed himself from the sin of it according to his notions of the Hindu religion. It will now become apparent how he must have had peculiar notions about his judgeship and his religion. Lord Chancellor Bacon was a keen lawyer but a corrupt judge, so much so that, as later day critics remarked, it was difficult to differentiate his corrupt law from his immense learning in his Judgments.

Well, to come back to Justice Muthuswamy Aiyar's dictum that Hindu temples were not founded for the benefit of the outcastes and others, I beg to demur. For one thing, there is no foundation for such a weighty dictum. I may willingly admit the proposition to be true in the case of a temple proved to have been founded by Smartha Brahmins – for I can very well understand the narrowness of vision, the insularity of that religious faith, the basic implication of the Aryan caste-system, the pretensions of the Dravida Brahmin, the deification of the Aryan Gods, the singing of the Vedic hymns and so on and so forth, which would have characterized such a foundation by such people. Vedic Patasalas and Brahmin Widow's Homes maintained out of public funds are even today, shining examples of the generosity of the cosmopolitan Brahmin.

But such a proposition can never be true and can never be accepted in the case of public temples, which were founded and have been in existence, long, long before Smarthaism and even Brahminism, as such, appeared in South India : which were founded when Buddhist and Jain temples and monasteries crowded the length and breadth of the country; when each of these religions was emulating and must have been competing with one another in securing converts to its own faith; when the rulers who founded these temples were themselves changing their religion every other minute, from Saivism to Jainism; from to Buddhism and back again as it pleased them; when toleration and religious freedom were the order of the day; when caste was unknown in South India or being ushered in slowly and stealthily; when these temples were dedicated not to Aryan Gods but to 'Rakshasa and Asura Dravidian' Gods; when Vedic hymns ought not to be sung within the sanctum sanctorum; when to have even admitted the Brahmin within the holy of holies would have brought disaster to the King and Country; and what is much the most important thing of all, when the revenues from these public temples went to fill the King's coffers and not the Brahmin's bellies; to apply in the case of such public temples, this dictum of the learned Brahmin Judge would be – I respectfully submit

in all Non-Brahmin humility – it would be monstrously unfair.

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Temples were state institutions; "public" property in the best sense of the term. Now a days Brahmin lawyers use the word "public" with reference to temples with their tongues in their cheeks. "*Prima facie* all Hindus belonging to the *four castes without exception* are entitled as on right to workshop in Hindu temples" It must be remembered Brahmins had no hand is setting up idols and temples. Max Mueller says: "The religion of the Vedas knows of no idols. The worship of idols in India is a secondary formation, a later degradation of the more primitive worship of ideal Gods".

Mr. J. C. Ghose in his Tagore Law Lecture says: "When the people engaged in the performance of Yajnas and Satras, the necessity for the setting up of temples and images was not felt... Brahmins alone could be Agnihotries. When the other castes became influential, they wanted gods for their worship. The wane of the influence of the Brahmins and the unpopularity of the worship of fire led to the worship of images which might have been borrowed from the aboriginal tribes and from the foreign invaders of India in ancient times. The setting up of images of Buddha and the Bodhisatwas and of Chaityas and stupas also probably made the setting up of images of Hindu gods and Hindu temples more general, in imitation of the Buddhists".

Justice Sadasiva Aiyar in the Panakudy temple case said: "Though image worship was thus recommended and laid open to all castes (by the shastras) it was clearly recognised as not the highest form of worship. The appropriate mode of worship for the Brahmins was held to be through the media of the fire and the sun".

In another case, the same learned Judge observed: "Idol worship itself was established in the beginning for communal purposes according to the shastras. Buddhistic influence had much to do with the development of idol worship in India. Buddhist temples arose in connection with Stupas over the relics of the Lord Buddha intended to publicly worshipped… That worship of idols is also intended for the masses is clear".

"The Hindu temples," Mr. Ghose continues, "succeeded the Buddhist temples and the Hindu monasteries and religious institution succeeded the Buddhist Viharas. Endowments in all cases were considered religious

even when made for congregations of ascetics or for the relief of man or beast. These were all religious endowments and were all *public.* The king also made large endowments and maintained them. Generous merchants and noblemen also made such endowments, on the revival of Hinduism. Kings and wealthy men built great temples for the gods which were *places of public worship.* Side by side with these great temples, people began to have their special household gods and to dedicate property for the maintenance of their worship. These endowments were *private".*

These altars, idols and temples came into existence at the behest of others than Brahmins; they were originally intended for the masses; including aborigines: there was no discrimination, no distance indented as between caste and outcaste , touchables and untouchables. That is what history tells us. And also, temple worship was encouraged by the old rulers, because it was a fruitful source or revenue for them. And temple worship was made attractive by the introduction of dancing and music.

"With the establishment of images and temples, dedications of land for their maintenance became necessary. Not only were lands dedicated but slave women were also attached to many ancient temples *showing the spirit which led to images worship in India.* Every temple even now is supposed have its dancing hall or Nata Mandir". Thus writes the Bengali Lawyer.

Brahmins it seems, were even *outcasted* even if they went and *worshipped,* in temples. That is historically and Vedically true. "We should know", says Mr. Ghose, "that dedication for the god meant dedication for the maintenance of the worshipping Brahmins *who because they so worshipped* were called *Devalas* and *were all but outcastes* among Brahmins, a fact showing the *not very reputable origin and character* of such worship and worshippers, the maintenance of servants, female slaves, "dancing girls and musicians and providing for the articles of worship".

In those ancient days, as even today temples were places of variety entertainment and were so designed by the rulers. Therefore, there need be nothing historically shocking in the remarks of Mahatma Gandhi that temples today are "dens of prostitutes." Historically, they were so intended by the founders.

At any rate in the days of Chanakya about 300 B.C., the King made very little distinction between "religious institutions, idols and altars"

on the one hand and "State owned drinking saloons to supply liquor to man, women and children of all castes". Both were State Departments working under separate officers of the King. The one was called the Superintendent of Religious institutions; the other was known as the Superintendent of Liquor. A comparative study of these two institutions ought to prove interesting and instructive.

Let us see what laws were laid down by Chanakya as regards the working of these "drinking saloons." They are so interesting up-to-date and efficient and the success in the conduct of these "saloons" must have led to the re-organisation of temples also on those lines.

"By employing such men as are acquainted with the manufacture of liquor ferments, the superintendent of liquor shall carry in liquor traffic not only in forts and country parts but also in camps.

"In accordance with the requirements of demand and supply, he may either centralise or decentralise the sale of liquor."

"Liquor shall not be taken out of villages nor shall liquor shops be close to each other".

"A fine of 600 panas stall be imposed on all offenders"....

"Lest workmen spoil work in hands and *Aryas violate their decency and virtuous character* and lest firebrands commit indiscreet acts liquor shall be sold to persons of well known character in small quantities. Those who are well known and of pure character may take liquor out of the shop".

"Or all may be compelled to drink liquor within the shops and not allowed to stir out at once."

"No fresh liquor, other than bad liquor, shall be sold below its price. Bad liquor may be sold elsewhere or given to slaves or workmen in lieu of wages or it may form the drink of beasts for draught or the subsistence of hogs"

"Liquor shops shall contain many rooms provided with beds and seats kept apart. The drinking room shall contain scents, garlands of flowers, water and other comfortable things suitable to the varying seasons"

"Spies stationed in the shops shall ascertain whether the expenditure incurred by customers in the shop is ordinary or extraordinary and also whether there are any strangers. They shall also ascertain the value

of the dress, ornaments and gold of the customers lying there under intoxication."

"When customers under intoxication lose any of their things, the merchants of the shop shall not only make good the loss but also pay an equivalent fine."

"Merchants seated in half closed rooms shall observe the appearance of false and foreign customers, who in real or false guise of Aryas, *lie down in intoxication with their beautiful mistresses*"

State drinking saloons must seem to the Varnasharmite, a much hoarier institution than idols and temples even, and if "ancient custom" or "immemorial usage" were the only surviving test for any one thing in India, today, then there is no greater danger to it, than the "total prohibition campaign" now in fashion. Such a propaganda in Chanakya's days would have been very, very high treason, indeed. But we are not at that question, just now.

In good old Chanakya's days men, women and children of all castes were supplied with fresh liquor (mark that) by the state as suited to their taste and capacity to stand it; the prices were reasonable; even the "virtuous Aryas" could have it without "much" trouble; separate drinking rooms and bed rooms could be had in those saloons; and what would have tempted even a Hogarth's favourite or a washed-out Don Juan, there were "beautiful mistresses" to be had, arranged by the Superintendent of Liquor, along with "scents, garlands of flower, water and other comfortable things suitable to the varying seasons"; what more could the heart of any one, Arya or Non-Arya, desire?

It does not require much of historical imagination to infer from Kautilya, that some time or other, these State "drinking saloons" must have been amalgamated with State "religious institutions." These "beautiful mistresses" of the saloons appeared in the "temples"; "scents, garlands of flowers, and water" could be had in both; "the sacred water" in the temple was made up of identical ingredients which went to the manufacture of Liquors also. Even the element of risk for the "virtuous Arya" in frequenting the public "saloons" must have been removed by this arrangement in the temples as "sacred water". Religion was employed to save virtue as even today it is the case.

It was by such inducements that the Brahmins (Agnihotris) were taken to worship in these Hindu temples; if they did go and worship, they

were treated as outcastes by the Brahmins themselves; perhaps, in order to give some sort of respectability to these temples Brahmins, at the risk of being outcasted, were induced by the masses and aborigines and by the attractions which were provided, to go and worship; and such outcaste, low and inferior Brahmins, because of their entry and worship in these temples had to be fed and maintained from these temples, along with dancing girls and musicians.

If there was such a huge lot of trouble for the Brahmin even for entering into and worshipping in a Hindu temple, it goes without saying that pujas inside the temple for the Non-Vedic 'aboriginal' gods would never have been performed by these Brahmins. Even today in South India the pujaris of all famous public temples are *not* Brahmins – who then these pujaris are is a different story altogether.

The Brahmins lost caste by going in for worship; and if they are or were fed, in such temples, it is because they had fallen low in Brahmin society and this eating, by itself was a hall mark of inferiority for the Brahmin.

Therefore in the old days, these Hindu ancient temples were founded by the rulers to please the masses and as a source or revenue to themselves – i.e., the rulers. These temples were later turned into paying places of entertainment by providing them with dancing girls and music; and these temples were made respectable socially, by maintaining some Brahmins as worshippers who had to be fed as their worshipping entailed them loss of caste.

It may not be irrelevant at this, juncture, to place before the reader the observations of Abbe Dubois:

"To have any connexion with a courtesan or with an unmarried person, is not considered a form of wickedness in the eyes of the Brahmins. These men, who look upon the violation of any trivial custom as a heinous sin, see no harm in the most outrageous and licentious excesses. *It was principally for their use that the dancers and prostitutes are attached to the service of the temples were originally entertained* and they may often be heard to intone the following scandalous line : *Vesya darisanam punyam papa nasanam'* which means "looking upon a prostitute is a virtue which takes away sin".

Again the Frenchman, a century ago wrote : "It appears *that at first they* (the courtesans and dancing girls, called *devadasis) were reserved exclusively*

for the enjoyment of the Brahmins. And these lewd women, who make a public traffic of their charms are consecrated in a special manner to the worship of the divinities in India. Every temple of any importance has in its services a band of eight, twelve or more. Their official duties consist in dancing and singing within the temple twice a day, morning and evening, and also at all public ceremonies."

It is something to have provided an historic basis for that wonderful affinity which subsists between the Brahmin and the Devadasi and which subsists even today. Without this basis, one will have missed the spiritual identity of the Brahmin championship of the Devadasi – lost the key to the mystery, as it were.

If what has been stated hitherto is historically true, then it stands to reason, that to every Hindu temple into which a single Brahmin can enter and worship and in which a single Brahmin is being fed, into each and every one of such temples every Hindu, caste or non-caste touchable or untouchable, can enter and worship. For it was for the latter's worship that these temples were built of oldp; if the Brahmin is fed, it is because he lost caste, became a cosmopolitan as it were, by barely worshipping in such temples along with all the others – caste Hindus, untouchables and depressed classes.

In so far as the Brahmin worshipper is concerned, as he becomes an untouchable by his very worship, he himself will have to get out of every Hindu temple, in order to keep it pure ; he will have to desist from worshipping therein and it goes without saying that he cannot eat in any Hindu temples, if he still claims to be a Brahmin.

On the temple entry question, the Varnasharmite Brahmin's mouth be he an official or non-official, lawyer or layman, retired or active, whatever it is, his mouth is historically sealed.

The Brahmin's entry into a temple is the index; if he can enter into a Hindu temple, every other person under the sun can enter it. If a single Brahmin is fed in any Hindu temple then that temple, historically and legally, will have to be open for worship to the lowest Pariah or Chandala also for worship – because that Brahmin is eating, historically and religiously, the sin, if any, of that Chandala worshipper.

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Every temple in India was founded by the old rulers with a view to get

a handsome return in the shape of offering from the worshippers There was no spiritual attribute about such foundations; no salvation behind. It was simple financial statecraft; as simple as the policy of taxing the drunkard to carry on the administration of the country.

Let us go to our old Brahmin friend, Chanakya – otherwise known as Kautilya – who lived now more than two thousand years ago. "Kautilya is renowned not only as a king-maker, but also for being the greatest Indian exponent of the art of government, the duties of Kings , ministers and officials and the methods of diplomacy". Kautilya's *Arthasastra* was prior to the Smritis of Manu and Yagnyavalkya – the law which is now so considerably administered to all and sundry under the appellation of Mitakashara.

Whatever opinions might be had about the "methods of diplomacy" enunciated by Chanakya, there is no disputing the fact that the first great known historical Brahmin was terribly honest about it – as the following passages from his Arthasastra will show.

"The superintendent of religious institutions may collect in one place the various kinds of property of the gods of the fortified cities and country parts and carry away the property to the King's treasury."

"Or having on some night set up a god or an altar or having opened a sacred place of ascetics or having pointed out an evil omen, the King may collect subsistence under the pretence of holding processions and trees standing on the King's garden."

We now come to more delightful methods for making money for "the King's subsistence".

A false panic must first of all be created in the city "an evil spirit has appeared on a tree!"! Within the tree the King has to arrange for hiding one of his men who must be making all sorts of devilish noises; of course the people must be made to see that the evil spirit must be pacified and allowed to depart in peace before dire calamity overtakes the city; there are the King's men; spies disguised as ascetics who collect the money and do the trick. The "evil spirit" departs and the money goes to the King's treasury. The king's officers in those days must have had a hard time of it in collecting revenues for the king.

The case of the serpent trick is still more interesting and is known to exist even today in a modified form in one temple at least. One can now see the several uses to which the "sacred water" of a temple might

have been put in Chanakya's days; even though that sacred water has now drawn upon it the ignorant condemnation of Miss Mayo. That "sacred water" was only used when persons who "are not by nature credulous" appeared; it was then "doctored" but all these stratagems, it must be remembered were employed in a noble cause – the King's cause. And not like today when the same or similar stratagems are constantly and variously employed to eke out a miserable existence for the employed.

"There is no trick" wrote the learned Abbe Dubois a century ago, "which the Brahmins will not employ in order to excise the fervour of the worshippers and thus to enrich themselves by their congregations to avert calamities."

"Or else he shall proclaim the arrival of gods, by pointing out to the people any of the sacred trees in the King's garden, which has produced untimely flowers and fruits."

"Or by causing a false panic owing to the arrival of an evil spirit on a tree in the city, wherein a man is hidden making all sorts of devilish noises, the King's spies under a guise of ascetics, may collect money with a view to propitiate the evil spirit and send it back".

"Or spies may call upon spectators to see a serpent with numberless heads in a well, connected with a subterranean passage and collect fees from them for the sight. Or they may place in a bore-hole made in the body of an image of a serpent or in a hole in the corner of a temple or in the hollow of an anthill, a cobra, which is, by diet, rendered unconscious and call upon credulous spectators to see it on payment of a certain amount of fee. As to persons who are not by nature credulous, spies may sprinkle over or a drink of such sacred water as is mixed with anesthetic ingredients and attribute their insensibility to the curse of gods. Or by causing an outcaste person to be bitten by a cobra, spies may collect revenue under the pretext of undertaking remedial measures against ominous phenomena."

"The offerings to the gods must reach the King's treasury; gods and altars will have to be brought into existence in a single night and processions and festivals will have to be arranged purely for collecting money for the King – for his subsistence; for his bare living. Gods must be made to appear in the offerings. The most obvious means generally produce the best results. In the foremost rank we must place the oracles, a rich mine of wealth which pagan priests of other countries

worked long ago with great success and which the lapse of ages has not yet exhausted for the heathen priests of India. Here it is the idol itself which addresses the dull of profoundly attentive crowd of worshippers, *who unable to be inside* or close by the god of stone, is speaking through the mouth of the idol". More of such tricks, even now existent, have been graphically described by the Frenchman. That is the way.

To come to Chanakya. Now one can understand why if a single pie out of the temple revenue failed to reach the King's treasury, the superintendent of religious institutions in Chanakya's days would have been hanged high and dry.

And very properly too. "Idols and altars" in those days were a hard business proposition. Money, public money, King's money, was spent upon manufacturing these idols and altars amd religious institutions, running them and 'boosting' them. These were looked upon as "productive works" by the old rulers just like the Mettur Project.

In those days, the old Indian Prince who founded these "religious institutions", had to maintain huge armies; surrounded by enemies on all sides they had to carry on an incessant warfare. That meant resources and money, plenty of it. Those wards had to be paid for it. Feeding the Brahmins alone out of the temple revenues would have spelt the disappearance of King and temple together. They knew – the old kings who founded these temples and these altars and these idols – that it was a hard job to make both ends meet. Just as our Ministers today know that total "prohibition" would mean for instance total stoppage of secondary and higher education in the land, our old rulers knew and had to be alive every moment to the fact that upon a careful husbanding of these revenues, they safety of their kingdoms and their very lives depended. Those were strenuous days for the Maha Rajahas. Their thoughts centred upon the here and now and not upon the hereafter. It is only nowadays when most of our Rajhas are either absentee landlords or have not the worries of responsibility, that they think of satisfying the Brahmin and booking their passages to heaven and salvation or Paris and Monte Carlo.

What has been stated till now will be enough to show that the king just wanted money from the temples. Who gave the money to him, who worshipped in his temples or who drank his liquor, made no difference to him – it may be a Chandala, a Sudra, a Vyssia, a Kshatriya

or a Brahmin. The more money the Chandala gave, the merrier the King was. The King would have even given "special benefit performances" with his idols and altars and serpents for the Chandala, if only money was forthcoming. If it reached his ears that a Brahmin it was, that was standing in the way of legitimate revenue reaching his coffers because a Brahmin was preventing a Chandala from entering a temple and worshipping the idol or cobra or tree, that man would have been strung up the nearest tree out of hand, Brahmin or no Brahmin.

That is to say, the ancient Hindu public temples were so much sources of public revenue to the King that if any one had even suggested that this, that or other an cannot, on any pretext whatever, enter a temple and worship an idol he would have been instantaneously pinned down for high treason.

The history of the origin of these temples very clearly shows that it was and must have been the avowed policy of the rulers to encourage everyone from Chandala to the Brahmin to go and worship and 'contribute his mite'. There was no exception made even in the case of the Brahmin. That is to say, everyone would have been actually compelled to go and worship and pay for it to the King.

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"As regards public temples and endowments" writes Mr. G.C. Ghose, the eminent lawyer, "ignorance of their history and original constitution has led to this confusion of the law." This is a rather severe indictment to bring forward against our lawyers, especially Brahmins. It just means that our lawyers are enveloped in profound ignorance; and the law as known and practiced today with reference to public temples and their endowments is the result of chaotic confusion. In so far as the temple entry question is concerned, it is absolutely true.

It shall be our endeavour to show that in law there can be no justification on the part of the so-called "trustees" (it is a legal anachronism to call them trustees) or on the part of the Devasthanam Committees or on the part of the so-called caste Hindus, in preventing any Hindu of any class whatever, from entering any public Hindu temple and worshipping therein. Nor can there be any justification for this pernicious policy on religious, social or historical grounds. On the other hand, it may be pointed out, that any persistence in this policy just spells the greatest disaster that both Hindu religion and Hindu society have hitherto met

with. It need not be emphasized that such a policy illegal, immoral, irreligious, insulting, selfish and unjustifiable can only proceed from quarters which have not the interests of Hindu religion and society at heart. In short, they are enemies and traitors to Hindu religion and society who, professing to be Hindus, still prevent brother-Hindus from entering these temples and worshipping therein, for any reason or upon any pretext whatever.

Let us proceed with the historical development of this branch of the law. We were at the position, deducible from Chanakya, that these Hindu temples were a source of profit and their revenues went to the King. And secondly, the position of the Brahmin in Hindu temples today is due to an accident. It was not intended for him or his worship; his temple worship was socially ruinous to him; his temple worship was dangerous to the King and Country. Spence Hardy says: "Image worship is alluded to by Manu but with intimation that the Brahmins who subsist by ministering in temples are an inferior class". Brahmin feeding in a Hindu temple never took place, except when he was outcasted and became poor and consequently formed part of the institution along with dancing girls and musicians. There is no mention of any Brahmins being fed in any religious institution in Chanakya's days. It would then, as now, have affected the revenues – earmarked for the King.

A small digression, please. Brahmins were out-casted, because they went in for temple-worship; and today, they are laying down the law as to which castes or sub-castes can have temple entry. The Brahmin goes with the Vellala, in this affair. It so happens that throughout South India, the right of these two communities to enter any Hindu temple seems to be taken for granted; and not merely that, they also seem to think that they have a right to say which other castes or sub-castes can have temple-entry and which not.

We have already indicated that, on historical grounds, if you find a single Brahmin entering a public temple, every other Hindu has also the right to enter. Similarly, if you find a Vellala or any other "good" sudra entering a temple, there can be no valid objection to any one, even a Non-Hindu, entering that temple for worship.

No one can now oppose, seemingly, the entry of a Brahmin into a Hindu public temple; nor of a Devadasi or a Dancing Girl; nor of the issue of such Devadasis. Such offspring of Devadasis were called in the

old days Dasiputras; those Dasiputras are our modern-day Sudras. At any rate, Sudras, inclusive of Vellalas, have the undoubted right to enter any public temple.

Even if the etymological significance of Sudra being Dasiputra be disputed, let us know who the "offspring" of these Devadasis are and what becomes of them, in South Indian society today.

"Formerly" writes a distinguished historian, "the Dasis undoubtedly enjoyed considerable social position on account of their service in the temples, but now they have degenerated into prostitutes and as such have fallen low in social scale. It is not, however, every Dasi that is married to the deity but only a few are so dedicated, of the rest some voluntarily follow the profession of prostitution while a large number marry and settle down as family women. Of the males, some marry in the caste and live by playing on the flute and other musical instruments at the dance and by teaching them dancing and music, while others marry and drift out of caste, follow other occupations and try to get rid of the stigma attached to their birth, by merging into the general community of respectable Sudras". This started in the days of Manimekalai.

There can be no reproach, neither historical nor racial, if the genealogy of the Vellala or Sudra is lost in the Devadasis as that of the Brahmin in his Rishis. In the matter of parentage, the Sudra is as "cosmopolitan" as the Brahmin. The offspring of Devadasis have become respectable Sudras today; some of them very respectable, indeed.

In the Panakudy Temple case, Justice T. Sadasiva Aiyar, had to observe, using judicial language: "Even among Sudras, those who consider themselves more respectable will try to avoid the touch of the less respectable classes though there is no ceremonial pollution caused by such touch. For instance DW1 says in the case, "I am a Sudra, caste Vellala. *I do not touch the lower class of Vellalas"*. This is not because their touch causes any religious pollution to the higher class but simply out of the exaggeration being due to 'class' sentiment having come in recent times to reinforce caste sentiment".

It is very often a difficult question to determine the paternity of the children of Devadasis; nor are we interested in discussing it here, except to point out that it is very much of a "cosmopolitan" affair. It may be pointed out that in law, the offspring of a Devadasi takes the mother's

status and not the father's, similar to that among Nairs on the West Coast, who are also reckoned Sudras.

Such being the case, there is considerable historical support for our view, that to whichever temple a Brahmin can enter, that a dancing-girl can enter, that a Dasiputra, including respectable Vellalas and Nairs, can enter, into that temple every Hindu (let alone a Non-Hindu for the present), every Hindu, of whatever denomination or caste or sub-caste – untouchable or depressed or oppressed – every one whom we call a Hindu and whom the Govt. have recognized as a Hindu, every such Hindu has the right to enter that temple and worship therein.

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Who has got the authority in law to prevent a Hindu from entering a public temple and worshiping therein? Has the 'trustee' of the Temple Committee, whose powers or the absence of it, seem to be similar, the right to do so? We shall deal with the rights of other sections of the Hindu Community itself later on.

Let us trace the history of these Committees of these Trustees. To use the compendious language of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council:

"In 1810 in the Bengal Presidency and in 1817 in the Madras Presidency, the British Government had assumed control of all the public endowments and benefactions, Hindu and Muhammadan, and placed them under the charge of the respective Boards of Revenue. In 1863, *under certain influences to which it is unnecessary to refer*, the Government considered it expedient to divest itself of the charge and control of these institutions and to place them under the management of their own respective *creeds*. With this object, Act XX of 1863 was enacted; a system of committees was devised to which were transferred the power vested to Government for the appointment of 'managers, trustees and superintendents'; rules were enacted to ensure proper management and to empower the superior Courts in the district to take cognizance of allegations of misfeasance against the managing authority." Their Lordships are not giving a Summary of the Act but indicating only its general features. The Act contains no definition of the word 'trustee'; it uses indifferently and indiscriminately the terms "manager, trustee or superintendent", clearly showing that the expressions were used to connote one and the same idea of management. After the enactment

of 1863, the Committee to whom the endowments were transferred were vested, generally speaking, with the same powers as the Government had possessed before in respect of the appointment of "managers, trustees or superintendents".

Two things must be noticed at this juncture; the first is, it was not explained as to what were the influences which brought about this change and secondly the transfer of powers by the British Government was to the respective creeds i.e., to the Hindus and Mahomedans respectively. That means, the transfer was not made nor intended to be made to any particular class or caste or section of community among the Hindus but to the whole body of all the Hindus. That is very important. In another case, the Privy Council was extremely careful to employ identical language: "The Government divested itself of the charge and placed them under the management of such respective creeds".

In the Tirupati Scheme Suit, the Madras High Court (consisting of Subramania Aiyar and Davies J.J.) said "The temple of Sri Venkateswara in Siramalai or Tirupati in the North Arcot District is a very ancient Hindu temple to which worshippers resort from all parts of India and is in receipt of an annual income of Rs.2 to 3 lakhs. Prior to the establishment of British Government, the management of the institution was directly under *the ruler of the country for the time being.* After the advent of the British, the management passed into the hands of the East India Company and subsequent to the enactment of Regulation VII of 1817 of the Madras Code, it was carried on under the Control of the Board of Revenue through the Collector of the District. *With reference to a dispatch of the year 1841 from the Court of Directors ordering the immediate withdrawal from all interference on the part of the officers of the Government with native temples and places of religious resort,* the management of the temple was in 1843, made over to Seva Doss, the head of a Mutt called Hathiramji Mutt, situated in the town of Tirupathi at the foot of the hill on which the important shrine stands. In the 'Sannad' by which this transfer of management was effected, it was provided that Seva Doss' successors in the Mutt should be his successors as Vicharanakarta or Manager of the Temple". Here also, there is no indication as to who wanted this non-interference of the British Government with Hindu temples.

"The control of the management of these temples, which was vested

in the Board of Revenue" says Mr. Ghose "was however found objectionable by many. *The objection to the control of the Board of Revenue came not from Hindus but from Christian Missionaries who protested against a Christian Government exercising control over pagan temples. So loud was the outcry* that the Government called for a report from the Collectors in 1841 with a view to transfer the management of religious endowments to qualified individuals. The Regulations about them were all repealed and by Act XX of 1863, the Board was relieved of the burden of looking after the temples and other endowments and provision was made for making over the properties to trustees or committees of management".

If Mr. Ghose, the learned Tagore Law Lecturer, whose standing as an authority has been recognized by the Privy Council, if he is to be believed then it was neither the Smriti of the Brahmin nor the Agama of the Saivite nor any Varnashramite nor any Hindu even, that was responsible for the present day Devasthanam Committee and the Trustee – it was the Christian missionary that wanted his Christian Government to get rid of this control over 'heathen' religious institutions.

"When a State was pledged to maintain a particular form of religion, religious institutions of a different religion or sect, or educational or charitable institutions intended to advance such religion or sect, could not be recognized or protected by it. It was for this reason that in Catholic countries, Protestant institutions were not protected by the State and in Protestant countries; Catholic institutions were not recognized by the State. It was for the same reason that the British Government as a Christian Government in 1863, withdrew from the direct supervision of Hindu and Mahomedan temples and endowments which it had assumed under the Regulations of 1810".

In their anxiety to be rid of a bother, the British Government did not indicate by the Act of 1863, to which caste or class or community among Hindus, these 'trustees' or members of the Temple Committee should belong. They possibly could not have indicated it, in restoring these temples in 1863, as equally they were not sure from whom or from which community or caste, if any, these religious institutions were originally taken by them and later on placed under the control of the respective Revenue Boards in Bengal in the year 1810 and in Madras in the year 1817.

To put it shortly, Hindus as Hindus without any distinction of caste or

colour got back their temples and endowments, in 1863, with identical powers of management of these temples and endowments and no more. There is not a whisper in that Act of 1863 or anywhere else, of authority being conferred by the Government upon these 'trustees' or temple committees to prevent any Hindu, as such from entering a public temple under their control and worshipping therein.

Have these 'trustees' and Temple Committees, inherent power, apart from any statutory authority which does not seemingly exist to prevent the entry of a Hindu to a temple for worship?

They may have undoubtedly the right to regulate the conduct of the public within the temples but not the right to *prohibit* any class or section of the Hindu public from entering for worship. Decent conduct is no doubt, an obligatory condition for entering a public temple as any other public place. "Rules by trustees for good order and decency and prevention of overcrowding are binding on all. They can "turn out creators of disturbance within the temples preventing the proper performance of worship". That is all. These are just the disciplinary powers which a trustee or a Temple Committee has got. Such powers are manifestly analogous to those possessed by a judge over his Court House.

"There cannot be the slightest doubt" said their Lordships of the Calcutta High Court in a well-known case, "that a judge has a general power over his own Court in the sense that he has a right to see that order is maintained, that the Court room is not encumbered by persons loitering about there to the detriment of the business of the Court and that the public are not allowed to enter those portions of the Court house which are not intended for their use. *But as a matter of fact the Court House is a public place and is a place to which the public has a right to resort* so long as they behave properly and do not make a disturbance and do not crowd the Court in such a way as to interfere with the disposal of business; and as long as persons behave themselves properly in a Court House there is no authority vested in any one to turn it into a private place; and though undoubtedly this learned Judge has a perfect right to control the way in which the Court room is to be used by particular persons – that is to say, to arrange the seats in such a way as he finds most convenient; allotting to the pleaders one place, to the parties another, and to the public a third – I do not think he is right or that he is justified in making any general order by which he excludes

any portion of the community, as a general body, from his Court and though I expressly wish to be understood as not interfering in any way with the right of the Judge to control his Court promises in such a way as is most convenient to the public and to persons working there, still I think this very general order is objectionable because it is directed against a particular class of persons."

These observations of the learned Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court sum up to a nicety the analogous powers of a trustee or Temple Committee. Any act by which any portion or class of the Hindu public is excluded by these trustees and Temple Committees from entering a public temple for worship will be completely beyond their powers and manifestly illegal if, at any rate, a temple of Justice stands, as it ought to on a par with a temple of God.

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What was the state of that Hindu Society between 1842 and 1863 when this transfer of Hindu temples and endowments to the 'creed' of Hinduism took place?

In that society, the Brahmins were then and long earlier, the most educated and the most politically minded class among the Hindus. And they were practically the official class also – which is everything in Indian society.

Why now a century ago, the Abbe Dubois wrote in 1816: "The Brahmins have also been clever enough to work their way into favour with the great European power that now governs India. They occupy the highest and most lucrative posts in the different administrative boards and Government offices, as well as in the Judicial Courts of the various districts. In fact there is no branch of public administration in which they have not made themselves indispensable. Thus it is nearly always Brahmins who held the posts of sub-collectors of revenue, writers, copyists, translators, treasurers, book keepers etc. It is especially difficult to do without their assistance in all matters connected with accounts as they have a remarkable talent for arithmetic".

"Furthermore, their perfect knowledge of native opinion and of the ways in which it may be guided, to say nothing of the influence which they exercise by the prerogative of birth, are quite sufficient reasons to account for the readiness with which their services are accepted. In fact, the veneration and respect with which their fellow countrymen

regard them, shed in the opinion of the vulgar, a kind of reflected glory and dignity on the different Government offices in which they occupy subordinate positions. But woe to the European head of the office who does not keep the strictest watch over the conduct of these said subordinates or places implicit confidence in them! He will soon find himself the victim of his own negligence, with his position seriously compromised".

The remarks of the translator Sir H.K. Beauchamp (former editor of the 'Madras Mail') run thus: "The proportion of Brahmins in Government employ is still large; for it is the Brahmins who, more than any others, have availed themselves of the benefits of English education".

Whatever be the reasons which made the Brahmin predominant in South Indian society at this period, it cannot be disputed that it is a fact that when the Government of India transferred these Hindu temples and endowments, these naturally and inevitably, passed into the control of the Brahmins and such of the Non-brahmin Caste Hindus who were Brahminical and even their number was a small one – uneducated, terribly superstitious and led by the nose by the Brahmin Purohit.

When the Act XX of 1863 "enabled the Government to divest itself of the management of religious endowments", it so happened, the Hindu society, then as now, was so constituted, that it enabled the Brahmin, directly or indirectly, to take upon himself the management of these Hindu religious endowments. And what happened when the British Government washed its hands off these things and when the Brahmin and the Brahminical Non-brahmin took up the management of these institutions, will be considered now.

The Government when it transferred these religious institutions to the 'creed' of Hinduism, omitted to define who a 'Hindu' was. This failure to define a Hindu led to the consolidation of Brahminical power and prestige and to the exclusion of the major portion of the Hindu population from their privileges of a Hindu citizenship, viz, the so called depressed classes, the untouchables and ever so many other Sub-castes and communities.

In so far as the Brahmin was concerned, with the assistance of Brahmin lawyers, Brahmin Judges and Brahmin text writers and other Non-Brahmins Brahminically inclined, he bettered and secured his position in a way which he could not have dreamt of, even in the fabulous days

of Rama Rajyam.

Temple worship was to the regulated according to his Smritis and not Agamas even; any and every *Dharmam*, known or unknown was made synonymous with Brahmin feeding, Brahmin comforts and Brahmin advancement; attempts were made, in law, first to indicate that temples were founded for their benefit, spiritual and material, latterly to assume that the Brahmin in was himself the deity; the Brahmin in South India got a move up socially and religiously; he could go into the holy of holies; his Guru can even perform puja inside a public temple; his Vedas became important; his Smritis assumed an importance in South India, which was made to compare favourably with that described by Ragozin in his 'Vedic India' – "a narrowly orthodox Brahminical School with its petty punctiliousness in the matter of forms, rites and observances, its intolerance everything un-Aryan, its rigid separatism".

Today in the light of historical research and criticism, that wonderful fabric of Smritis, that house of cards built so laboriously by the South Indian Brahmin Varnashramite, is falling about his ears. Now, it will be plain, why an ardent Travancore Brahmin, a veritable pillar of Varnashrama Dharma appeared before the Simon Commission and pleaded that no *Indians* at all should be made High Court Judges. No doubt, it was laughed out; but there is more in that Brahmin's suggestion than meets the eye. It was evidently not meant to exclude Brahmin Judges like Sir. T. Muthuswamy Aiyar who did Prayaschittam whenever he had to confirm a capital sentence, it was aimed at Brahmin judges of the type of the late Sir. T. Sadasiva Aiyar. Of course Non-brahmin Indian Judges ought not to be there at all.

It is just because all the pretences of the Brahmin, the official, the lawyer and the Judge, are being found out and exposed that this Travancore variety of the Varnashramite comes out with the *native* suggestion that no *Indian* Judges shall find a place in the highest tribunal in the land. Oh! Ye shades of Chanakya!

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Hindu temples were always cosmopolitan and were intended by the founders to be cosmopolitan. It was only yesterday that the whole trouble arose.

We concluded the last article, by asking the question as to why it was that the Brahmin was fighting shy, of the Agamas, it would turn out

that as a Brahmin he has no right to enter a temple for worship; that he will have to lose all his privileges gained recently after the advent of the English, by twisting and torturing the law on the subject, and by playing upon the ignorance of the credulous and simple-minded masses.

The first thing to be done is to notice the difference between Agamas and Smritis. This portion of the subject will be treated as light' as possible. The writer relies upon the profound scholarship of Mr. K. Subramonia Pillai M.A., M.L., for Agamic information, even though Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar also has dealt with the subject as lucidly in his recent book "History of the Tamils." The quotations are taken from Mr.Pillai; the comments and inference are my own.

"The Source of Smiritis is Vedic; while that of the other is Agamic Tantric which may be used as a synonym for Tamilian". This distinction is important this way: ….."the study of the Vedas is restricted to the twice-born; while that of the Agamas is open to all Castes and Communities." That is to say, even a Pariah or Chakklia or a Chandala can master the Agama; there is no restriction as in the case of Vedas and Smritis. Consquently the Vedists "will look upon such of the Brahmins as seek initiation into the Agamic religion as the dregs of Brahmin society," And further they view "that Agamas are intended for those who are *by birth* unfit to read the Smritis and Puranas." Sir John Woodroffe seems to have expressed his wonder "at the contract between the cosmopolitan character of the Tantras and the parochial restrictions of the Vedas."

From the observations and from further things to be noticed, it will be evident that wherever Agamic form of worship is adopted – and that is the case throughout South India, as also the north – that temple is cosmopolitan and is intended for all castes and communities among Hindus and not merely to the twice-born. I shall make it clearer.

Please notice two things laid down by Justice Sadasiva Aiyar in the Panakudy Temple Case:-

(a) "So far as the Garbagraham is concerned, it is only the Brahmins who belong to the temple-priest sect that could stand inside it for the purpose of worship. Ordinary Brahmins, Pillais and Mudaliars are entitled to worship from the outer Mantapam."

(b) "Ordinary Brahmins were not allowed to go into the Garbagraham,

> as the touch of the uninitiated, (i.e., those who had not Deeksha) though they be Brahmins was supposed to pollute the images"

According to the Agamas then as accepted by Justice Sadasiva Aiyar (and he seems to have known something about it, whereas as pointed out already Justice Muthuswami Aiyar displayed profound ignorance about it) an ordinary Brahmin cannot enter the "holy of holies" and his entrance therein will cause "pollution." The only Brahmin who can enter it, is, what he euphemistically calls, "*the temple-priest sect Brahmin.*"

And who are the temple-priest sect Brahmins?

"Temple priests are regarded as a low class of Brahmins. This feeling seems to have been in existence from the days of Manu", says Mr. P. R. Ganapathy Aiyar, the learned Madras Brahmin commentator. Well and good.

Justice Seshagiri Iyer says (in a well-known reported case which went up to the Privy Council) "The next circumstance relied on is that the family of the defendants (Gounders or Vellalas or Sudras) are the archakas. *It is true they do not belong to a class from which the Poojaries of a temple are drafted. But there is no rule that unless a person belongs to a particular class, he should not perform worship in a temple."*

"In the well-known temple at Chidambaram there are a large number of archakas who claim to have come down to earth along with the Deity for which they are performing Pooja. *They do not belong to the caste* from which ordinarily temple archakas are drawn."

To put it shortly, the Dikshitars of Chidambaram are not Brahmins and there is no rule at all that a temple priest should be a Brahmin or that he should belong to any particular class or caste.

This view of Mr. Justice Seshagiri Aiyar was accepted by the Privy Council, when the case went up on appeal. Said their Lordships of the Privy Council: "It may perhaps appear to be strange that the Pujari of a public Hindu Temple should be of a caste other than that of a Brahmin; but apparently in the Presidency of Madras, there are some Hindu public temples, the Pujaris of which are Sudras. Mr. Seshagiri Aiyar in his judgement in this case stated that 'there is no rule that unless a person belongs to a particular class (caste) he should not perform worship in a temple and he referred as an example to the well-known public temple at Chidambaram in which he said, the priests (Pujaries)

are not Brahmins'. The accuracy of that statement has not been questioned in this appeal".

Reading between the lines, it is easy to see that "the temple-priest sect Brahmin" of one Brahmin Judge, is a "low class Brahmin" according to the Brahmin commentator, and is *no Brahmin at all,* according to another Brahmin Judge and the Privy Council but is a plain Sudra in those public temples where Agamas govern the situation.

It is again this 'Sudra" who can enter the Garbagraha or holy of the holies, which an ordinary Brahmin can not enter, not even His Holiness Sankaracharya, because he also is an uninitiated Brahmin according the Agamas. While this 'Sudra's puja pleases the deity, even the approach of the ordinary Brahmin within the holy of the holies, brings about pollution to the image. A Brahmin to pollute? What do the Agamas mean? It does not stop here if we go by the Agamas.

(1) "Even an *initiated* Brahmin should not *touch* any of the idols in the Saivite temple but can only serve as cook or (can be) *any other menial servant* "

(2) "An initiated Saivite of whatever community (*even a Pariah can get initiated*) should not receive food or drink at the hands of an uninitiated Brahmin".

From these and more yet to come, it will be found that even according to Agamas which are said to govern these institutions, all the temples were open to all Hindus alike touchable and untouchable. As a matter of fact, a correct reading of these Agamas would go to show that nobody in those days could ever have dreamt of excluding anybody of any religion, let alone an untouchable Hindu, from entering a Hindu temple for worshipping. Today's exclusion is un-Agamic and more political than religious.

As a great Agamic scholar observes: "Saivism and Vaishnavism keep some kind of initiation open to all classes including the Pariahs. Even a Pariah may be admitted into the temple provided he is a member of the religion, observing clean habits of life. It is Varnashrama Dharma that has resulted in the keeping of the Panchamas from entrance into the temple."

- *Revolt*, 28 July; 4, 11 and 25 August; 20, 27 October, 1929; 19 January 1930

Notes to 4.3

1. This essay comprises a series of articles serialized in *Revolt* under the title "The Right of Temple Entry". Subsequently, and with more chapters added, these were consolidated into a book and published in 1933 with a preface by Periyar E.V.Ramasami. P.Chidambaram Pillai , as is evident from his writings, was a leading Self-respector of the time was also a legislator in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore.

5 TAMIL SAIVISM AND SELF-RESPECT

The Saivaites Meet

Tinnevelly has witnessed the august gathering of the Saivaites of the province. For the last three months, there was such a great fuss about the conference that we were spending sleepless nights as to what would result from a congregation of the great savants of Saivism. We were also one of those who were anxiously expecting some good results from the assemblage of the great Tamil scholars of our province. We thought that the Saivaites have begun to take a sincere interest in the idea of reforming their religion according to the present standards of society. We also hoped that they would do something towards the enlistment of the depressed and the downtrodden. It was only with that fond hope that we published a series of questions in our papers to be carefully considered by those who were interested in the spread of Saivism.

We now see that we have been disappointed in our expectations. Our hopes have vanished into the thin air. The learned president has not only given vent to his cherished ideals, but has been an obstacle to those who came forward with sane views. He has attacked the Self - respect movement, but has not taken the pains to justify his attack. In short, he has joined the band of such vaidiks of the province as the president of the Varnashrama Conference, and the president of the Asthiga Sangam. Saivism, we are aware, owes its present position only to the few English educated scholars who recently attempted some reforms in it. Swami Vedachalam, the late V. P. Subramania Mudliar, Mr. K.Subramanian Pillai and others of this category are inseparably connected with Saivism. Their work in the sphere of reform and research has been chiefly responsible for the little popularity that is claimed for it. Or else Saivism would have been a thing of the past.

The intolerant nature of Saivism is clearly evident from the following passage, which we quote from the preface of "Caste and its Evil", by Swami Vedachalam. He says, "The occasion which called it (this book) into existence was this. I was present at the annual gathering of the Saiva Siddanta Saba held at Tuticorin in December 1910. The lecturers were treated rather badly, simply because they happened to belong to non-vegetarian castes. Only those whose lineage was known to have

originated with the vegetarian Vellala parents, were invited to sit in one hall and dine together; while others, whose adherence to Saiva religion and clean vegetarian mode of living could not be questioned, but whose only fault was, what was occasioned by the mere accident of birth, were made to sit aloof in a separate place and served meals rather lately. I made up my mind to dine rather with the excluded party than with such self-conceited Saivaites. And accordingly, I did dine with the forbidden brethren. But so much did this action of mine enrage the Saivaite brethren that, on the next day, they forbade me entering their dining hall during meal-times".

This is one aspect of the present state of Saivism. Another aspect is with reference to the marks on the forehead. The present day Saivism is so emphatic about the necessity of the 'holy' ashes on the forehead that one of the resolutions of conference emphasizes upon the mark as an essential feature of Saivism. The twelve Thirumurais and certain portions of Vedas and Agamas are accepted as the scriptures of Saiva religion and yet Saivism is said to be acceptable for all states of society and for all time. We hear for the first time, of a religion *for all time* and *for all states of society*. We shall be glad to be informed by these Saivaites, what is the proportion of the Saivaites to other religionists of the world. A religion of universal love, as Saivism is claimed to be, had played an important part in the impaling of the Jains and Buddhists. The Puranas say this and festivals are also held in Saiva temples. And today the ardent followers of this religion are the most intolerant religionists of the world. Saivism stops in many cases with vegetarianism. Even then, the superiority of birth plays its mischievous part. For, we know as a matter of fact, the pillars of Saivism, in spite of their being vegetarians are not allowed the privilege of dining with the so-called hereditary vegetarians. Then again, Saivism stops with the mark on the forehead, the tuft of hair and the beads. This is the *dress aspect* of this universal religion.

Then with regard to the question of untouchables, the Saivaites pride themselves in the universality of their religion by citing the example of Nandanar, as one among the band of 63. But when it comes to the question of practicability, the living Nandanars are treated worse than animals. If today there are any people in our province who are deliberately bent upon suppressing the depressed classes, it is, we can boldly say, the, the so-called Saivaites and yet it is an 'universal' religion. If the Saivaites are really sincere about introducing reforms in their

religion, if they are really alive to the inequalities perpetrated in the name of god and religion, shall we ask them how far they have attempted to bring their words to action.

A three month's fuss about the Conference has ended in a little bit of smoke at Tinnevelly. The conveners, we understand have been very careful in disallowing 'undesirable elements' into the 'universal religionists' gathering. Placards stating that nobody should raise questions were hung. Perhaps this ingenious method was adapted from the Saivaite magnate of Puvalur, where the same thing was done recently on the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the Saiva Siddhanta Sangam. The spread of Saivism under police bandobust is a new feature to be noted by the historian. This is but a reflection of impaling of the Jains and Buddhists by 'Saint' Gnanasmbandar. And yet this is a religion of 'universal love'. It is not a negligible factor that one Saiva Conference has led to another at Cuddalore. If Tinnevelly has done anything, it is this: It has intelligently suppressed the raising of questions, and has given out some vague suggestions. If Mr. Thirukudasundram Pillai was denied admission, it shows only another aspect of this 'universal' religion. We anxiously await the next gathering of these ardent advocates of the Saiva religion.

- *Revolt*, 10 April 1929

The Tinnevelly Saiva Conference

(By Sam Fuller)

The readers of *Revolt* will be glad to note that this Conference was the direct outcome of the energetic exposure of the morbid growth of Saivism for ages by the Self-respecting party at its conference recently held at Chengleput. Under the auspices of the Madras, Tuticorin, Palamcottah and Tinnevelly Saiva Sabhas, this Conference met at the Ganapathy Vilas Theatre, Tinnevelly town on the last three days of March during the Easter season. Almost every Tamil District had its representatives, both educated and orthodox Saivaites. During its sittings about twenty five subjects were discoursed on; and though the Subjects Committee arrived at certain conclusions, they were not adumbrated as resolutions at the public meeting. Mr. Sachithanandam, who presided at the Conference, was tactful enough to steer clear of the shoal and shallows of Orthodox Saivism. It is to the great credit of *Kudi Arasu* and *Revolt* that the thoroughly sectarian Saivaites accepted free-entry in

temples, of the untouchables and unshadowables, should they turn Saivaites and (accept) vegetarianism as an important creed, and also re-conversion of Indian Christians and admission of men of alien faith into the fold of Saivism under a specified declaration and costless ceremony. Though vegetarianism implies ahimsa, non-killing and non-flesh eating, it need not be a condition for temple-entry and for absorption into the Saivaite band; for, at the present day many flesh-eating sections such as Maravas, Yadhavas, Naidus etc., come under the category of Saivaites and have free temple entry without the imposition of vegetarianism. This being the case, the imposition of vegetarianism on the re-converts and new embracers of Saivism is an obstacle or a stumbling block to the spread of that faith.

Another point that engaged the long and serious attention of the Conference and the Subjects Committee was the fixing of the Scriptures or the standard authorities (text books) for Saivaites. The Conference had not the courage of its conviction to cut adrift from the Vedas and Agamas and the twelve Thirumurais imbued with Vaidik Saivism. The Vedas are a forbidden fruit to the Non-Brahmins as a whole and the Agamas are yet to see the light of the day in Tamil.

These two authorities have been and are being quoted ever and anon by the Sanskritist to hoodwink the vernacular-knowing peoples and to appropriate their hard earnings for the performance of one ceremony or other. Voluminous in themselves, they cannot be gone through even by the wealthy individuals of the learned and leisured community. The happy suggestion made by a casual visitor, who was not a member of the Subjects' Committee that the Saivaite Scripture for the present day world absorbed in making both ends meet, must be a small compendium but comprehensive one like the Christian Decalogue and the *Sivagnana Botham* in *Tamil* is of that description was accepted by the majority, but sacrificed at the altar of the Saivaite's sentiment towards the four hymns of the four great religious Teachers. It is deplorable, that the Conference though apparently large-intentioned, succumbed to the prestige of the earthly human gods and has thereby consigned the masses to time-honoured ignorance and superstitions.

Further, the Subjects' Committee trembled and trepidated when the question of an intermediary between God and man came on the anvil; and when Benares and Goharnam were cited as instances, some were audacious enough to quote the priest in Christian Churches, in

Mosques, etc., to justify the continuance of the pujari in the temples. They altogether ignored the vulture aspect of the pujari muttering and mumbling mantras, ununderstandable by the worshippers as distinguished from the parson or mullah who helps or leads the congregation in prayer in its own tongue, and preaches a sermon calculated to raise the wretched up to virtue's high path or to enlighten the spiritually thirsty assembly. The temple 'tharshan' question being the most important one, it must be sat on the forthcoming Conference at Cuddalore, lest the Conferences of this kind lose public confidence.

Whatever be the decisions of the Conferences, it would take a long time to put them into practice. So steps were suggested to educate the masses in the principles of reason and rational religious freedom before the temple authorities could be approached for giving effect to them. Thanks to the presence of double and triple barreled graduates, the conference was able to overcome the narrow prejudices of the orthodox Saivaites and come to reason in the matter of temple entry and of conversion or re-conversion of men of alien persuasion. So far so good. It is hoped that as years advance, and more light is thrown on the subjects of the Saivaite creed and belief, greater toleration will prevail and make for higher civilisation and universal brotherhood.

- *Revolt*, 10 April 1929

To the Saivites

We have time and again pointed out in these columns how the Saivites of our province have begun to feel the impending necessity of reconstructing their religion. Some of the orthodox elements of Saivism who were persistent about the retention of age-long customs are beginning to realise that their very religion runs the hazard of being washed away in the rationalistic current that is flowing rapidly in every bosom of the younger generations. Our frank observations about the present day Saivism and its intolerant attitude have only roused the fury of some puritanic members of the creed. Our intention is not to purposely wound the religious feelings of any person, but to do away with anything which is a hindrance to equality, liberty, justice and progress. But we know, that things look yellow to jaundiced eyes. And that is no fault of ours. We wish to draw the attention of our readers, especially the staunch Saivaites to the series of articles written by our learned friend Mr. Chidambaram Pillai, the first of which we are

publishing elsewhere in this issue. As one belonging to Saivism itself and as one who has studied the subject in detail, Mr. Pillai is dealing with all disputed questions, point by point, and gives an unprejudiced opinion about them. His arguments are chiefly based upon the critical study of Saivism by the famous Jurist, Mr. K. Subramania Pillai. Our friend shows how the Saivaite mentality and vision are blurred by an overdose of the religious bigotry and how the Self-respect movement is humanitarian in its outlook. Let those Saivaite magnates who cry hoarse at the introduction of reforms, read these articles with a clear mind and think over them in their solitude.

- *Revolt*, 1 May 1929

Saivite Mentality and Self-respect

(By P.C. Chidambaram Pillay, B.A., B.L)

In the balanced words of Mr. A. Ramasami Mudaliar, "the rising star of the unbending Non-Brahmins," the leaders of the Self-Respect movement "have done their task; they have increased the literature over this question; (of temple worship and temple entry); they have driven you to examine the whole position; they have made you realize that your religious system wants an examination and while you were sleeping, the need has arisen – if need be – even to combat the Self-respect propaganda, that you should come forward with your views, with your ideas, with your facts of the religious and social system in the country. That, I believe, has been the result of their activities".

The Saivites of Madras Presidency, as a result of this aggressive movement, very properly examined their position at a Conference in Tinnevelly recently. Somehow or other, their attitude was not considered sympathetic towards the Self- respect Movement. That is why Mr. Ramasami Mudaliar had to say in his Gokhale Hall speech as regards temple worship, "Tinnevelly is up". Tinnevelly was up against a stiff proposition; Mrs. Grundy in Tinnevelly was trying to sweep the ocean back from her doorsteps.

From the nature of the proceedings which took place in that conference and the resolutions passed therein particularly with reference to the entry of the oppressed classes into temples for worship it looks as though the Saivites are not with the Self-respect movement. It is indeed regrettable that it should be so.

As a born Saivite, for what it is worth, I am indeed sorry that my learned friends should have pursued such a short sighted and suicidal policy at Tinnevelly.

Let us see what exactly is the position of the Non Brahmin Saivites themselves in the matter of temple worship. I can do no better than quote my esteemed friend Mr. K. Subramania Pillai M.A., M.L., a scholar of very wide repute in Tamil; one of the few profound Jurists in India; and an acknowledged authority on Saiva Sidhanta Philosophy. (The extracts are from his publication styled "A Note on the Madras Religious Endowments Bill".)

First of all, let us see where exactly the Saivite public in South India stand, in the matter of their religious beliefs. Says Mr. Pillai.

(1) "Even in Tamil land, the sly and ever aggressive tide of Aryan spiritual domination has been long creeping into the minds of the ignorant Tamil public and threatening to shake the foundations of Tamilian thought and culture."

(2) "It is a pity that the *majority* of the Tamil Saivite public are grossly ignorant of the *very ends and aims* of their institutions and what is worse, are labouring under a confusion of their faith with Smarthaism." (The italics are mine; by Smarthaism is meant I suppose, Brahminism).

(3) "The *average* Saivite or Vaishnavite is generally ignorant of the tenets of his religion and he goes to worship in a temple with a material end in view led by the prospect of a divine blessing which *superstition* holds up to the public gaze."

(4) "The Majority of Hindus little care to respect the rules of their religion."

(5) "The religious ignorance of the Saivites and the temple priests is a source of self-sought confusion to them."

(6) "The ordinary Non-Brahmin Saivite with little knowledge of his religion is apt to be victimized by the glib tongued Smartha diplomat."

Now these observations of Mr. K. Subramania Pillai will go to show

that the Tamil Saivite public are vastly ignorant of what religion is and what their temples are for, and what is more significant, that Tamilian worship is based purely upon superstition.

I cannot conclude this aspect of the question more pertinently than by adopting his own words. "In the present state of popular indifference to religion, it may happen that the reasonable cry of the *educated few* in support of the legitimate ideals, is drowned in the confused din and stir of the materially minded and their leaders, and the true character and purpose of the temples is lost sight of."

Very weighty words, these. But one may well ask the Tinnevelly Saivites who are as ignorant of their religion as their neighbours, that even if the *reasonable* cry of the educated few (and we do not know their number nor who they are) is getting systematically drowned and that even before the Self-respect movement was started, one may well ask them, as to what is going to happen, now, to the unreasonable cry of the Saivite, many or few, educated or uneducated, that the oppressed classes should not be given an entry into the temples for worship.

There is a proverb in Tamil which says; "It is not the beating by the husband that irritated the wife but because the mother in law was looking on". There is absolutely not the slightest reason for any Saivite to get offended with the Self-respect movement. On the other hand, as I shall show presently, he ought to be right in the forefront, in the vanguard of the movement itself.

II

Let us see who exactly is responsible for the deplorable condition of the temples of the Non-Brahmin Saivite. To be guided again by Mr. Subramania Pillai, he says:-

1. "Even today the Puja in the Saivite temple is performed only by Adi-Saivites and the Agama expressly forbids Smarthas from entering the Holy of Holies and performing the Archanai on pain of disaster to the king and community."

2. "In the Saivite religion the Adi-Saivites are given the highest place in society, although by the Smarthas they are viewed as half-sudra aliens."

3. "The Adi-Saivites themselves were probably a sub-class of Vellalas."

4. "The Adi-Saivite who performs the Puja is not of the same race as the Smartha Brahmins."

5. "The temple priest in most cases goes to a Smartha assistant for Agamic information who naturally presents to him a medley of Agamic and Smritic rules in respect of temple ceremonies."

6. "The uninitiated Smarthas look down upon Tamil as the language of the Sudras and the *foolish* Adi-Saivites carried away by the glamour of their wealth and position falls a prey to their suggestion that Sanskrit alone is a language of the Brahmins."

7. "The priest of the temple is mostly sunk in gross ignorance of the tenets of his religion and treats his office more or less in a mercenary spirit. *He feels as a kind of Brahmin* that he has no common interest with the members of the religion and he is carried away by the material progress and prosperity of the English knowing Smartha gentry and feels it the fullness of bliss that life could give him if he wins a corner in the fold of the Smarthas."

There is a well known proverb: "The Dhoby loved his wife and his wife loved the ass."

So then, the pujari is the tragedy; and not the Self-respect movement. The Pujari must be an Adi -Saivite – a sub class Vellala – according to Saivism. He was permitted to occupy the highest position in Non Brahmin Saivite society. Not because of his culture or learning. He was most often a fool entirely ignorant of his own religion and working for purely mercenary ends. Instead of being satisfied with the highest position given to him by the Vellala-Saivite-Sudra Society he wanted to become something better, a Brahmin and quite properly said, it was a proper ambition on his part because it is the ambition of every Non Brahmin Saivite to reach a higher level, to become something of a Brahmin in spite of protestations to the contrary. The net result of it is, the Adi-Saivite Pujari deserted the Vellala Saivites and is making (and has all along been doing it) common cause with the Brahmins. According to Mr. K. S. Pillai, it was due to the mischief of the Brahmin, the ignorance of the Saivite and the never ending cupidity of the Adi-Saivite. Partly also it seems to have been due to the ignorance of the Saivite Committee Members and Trustees of Temples.

The Non Brahmin Saivite was between the Devil and the Deep Sea.

Now let us see what happened to the Non Brahmin Saivite at the hands of the Brahmins after the latter had got hold of the Adi Saivites.

1. "As a well organized intellectual body, the Smartha Brahmins best know how to make the most of their chances in the temples and convert them into Smritic institutions. Already they have won the outskirts of the Saiva system by making people believe that Saiva Siddhantam or Agamic system is nothing else than a part of their so called big religion and are simply biding their time to make them selves masters of the situation."

2. "The realization of their object is visible in the application of the increasing surplus of a Saivite temple like Rameswaram (which was till lately under the control of a Saivite Pandarasannadhi according to immemorial usage) not at all for the proper religious instruction of the temple priests or Saivite worshippers thereof, but to Sanskrit education little useful to the temple, exclusively in the interests of Smartha and Vaishnaivite Brahmins."

3. "Within living memory almost all the Saivite temples were wholly in the hands of Saivite gentlemen and Saiva Madathipathies but the face of affair has been wholly changed by the Smarthas coming into power."

Therefore it is a grievance on the part of the Saivite that there are, at the present movement, very few temples which he can call his own. They are now almost all of them under Brahmin domination. Therefore the quarrel, in so far as the puristic Saivite is concerned, is not with the followers of the Self Respect Movement, who avowedly are not interested in the domination of any human being in any temple which is professedly dedicated to God and neither to a Saivite nor to a Brahmin.

III

And what happened next, in the Saivite temples, after the Brahmin domination? Let Mr. K .S. Pillai himself narrate it.

1) "Strenuous attempts have been and are being made to set up the idol of Adi-Sankara in Saivaite temples and the smarthas are thus waiting for an opportunity to avail themselves of the ignorant and credulous Saivites to assert unwarranted claims of this nature."

2) "At Tiruchendur some of the Smarthas are fed at a spot in the Sannidhanam of the deity at the time of Naivedyam by way of providing messmates to God Subramanya. This will show how the Smartha Guru will be naturally viewed as God's peer."

3) "The Saivite trustees and committee Members ignorant of and indifferent to their religion are misled by Smarthas into celebrating two Sivarthri days, one for the Saivites and the other for the Vedists.".

4) "Even last year (1921) a respectable gentleman who is a good Tamil scholar and a High court Vakil was required to obtain the special permission of the Smartha trustees to deliver lectures on Saivism in the Tinnevelly Temple for the simple reason that he wanted to preach the true ideals of the religion."

5) "In Tiruchendur, for instance, the Madhva or Smartha priests substituted for Adi Saivites to perform the Puja to the central deity are ignorant of the Agama called Kumara Tantram which was the original code of ceremonies for the temple. The proper course ought to have been the reform of the Adi Saivites or substitution of other Saivite priests for them."

6) "Because the Vedic hymns were sung in Sanskrit, the ordinary Saivites were ignorant of the fact that the Smarthas sang songs about their various petty gods in the Saiva temples."

7) "In many of the Saivite temples where Thevaram is sung, its singing is interfered with by the distribution of Prasadams to Brahmins before it is completed. (In all the temples in Travancore which are entirely under Govt. control, Prasadams are never offered to a Non Brahmin by the priest but are thrown on the floor. Seemingly Mr. Pillai is not aware of this.)

8) "The Sanskrit college founded out of the Saivite temple at Rameswaram had been already adverted to."

Put in plain language, what does the complaint of the Saivite amount to? There is no temple for the Saivite; his pujari has either disappeared or has joined the Brahmin ranks; the Saiva Madathipathies have fallen a prey to Brahmin influence, and have forgotten all about Saivism; the Brahmins have constituted themselves the peers of the Gods and are

actually dining with the Gods leaving the Saivite out in the cold; the Brahmins Prasadam is seemingly more important to him than the Saivites Thevaram; Brahmin priests are singing hymns in Saivites temples in a language which neither the singer nor the sung understand but the Gods seemingly understand and appreciate them. Thus put, all the rituals and ceremonies in all Saivite temples are purely Brahminical and nothing Saivitic about it. And the crowning insult of it all was that it is being found necessary to get the permission of Brahmins for "respectable and educated" Saivites to lecture in those temples and lecture on their own religion.

IV

Now under such circumstances, one thing is perfectly clear. It ought to come with an ill grace from a Non-Brahmin Saivite to have to refuse permission to any member of any class whatever of the so called Hindu society to go and worship in such a temple; which avowedly does not now belong to the Saivite; where the ceremonies are not conducted by his own Pujari; nor according to his Saiva religion; where the singing of his Thevaram is being interfered with and where even discourses on his religion by "educated" and "respectable" Saivites are not countenanced.

Anther thing is equally clear. The purist of a Non-Brahmin Saivite must have his hands full and his work cut out for him. He must have very little time left to look after the spiritual or religious welfare of others while he cannot call his soul his own. He requires all the time and energy at his disposal for conveying the "true religion" to his own ignorant "Saivite Public"; to his equally "ignorant" Guru or Madathipathi; to his still more ignorant priest of an Adi Saivite and to the not less ignorant Temple Trustees and Committee members. He has got to lead "the famous temple builders of the South" – the Nagarathars – into the right track and dissuade them from founding Vedapatasalas. He has got to dislodge the Brahmin from the Saivite temples, prevent him from performing Pujas and Archanais and from dining with the Gods, prevent him from constructing more Sanskrit college out of Saivite funds than the one at Rameswaram.

It is because many a Saivite found it manifestly impossible to achieve any of the above objects and not worthwhile achieving it at that, that he left the Saivite fold and joined the Self-respect movement. Here is at any rate something that is alive. It is not exactly flogging a dead

superstition. It is a live issue intended to conserve the Self-respect of every individual being.

Why should a "respectable" Saviite gentleman seek the permission of Brahmin Trustees for delivering lecturers upon his religion in his "own" temple? Why enter that temple at all?

Why should you permit Brahmins to perform puja in your temple, when your religion says it ought not to be done and it is not to the good of the king or the community?

Why should you permit Brahmins to dine with your Gods? Why do you allow all these things? Have you any Self- respect? Why do you stick on to such miserable temples where you can find admittedly, no religious consolation yourself?

Why don't you build other temples yourself – your own temples, to worship your own Gods in your own way according to the dictates of your one and only "true religion" Saiva Siddhanta and retain something of your Self- respect?

My friend Mr. Sachidanandam Pillai has said of the Depressed Classes in these touching words in his little book, "The present condition of Saiva Religion" – published in 1926 (in Tamil):

"We must add on to our numbers our poor brethren. All of them, at least most of then, right from the beginning, were noble minded people wearing holy ashes, as suited to their condition in life, that were worshiping petty Gods. *It is but correct and proper that they also should be included in the statistics of the Saivites as such*. As by remaining Saivites, there is no hope for them either in this life or in a future one, these poor people with a view to enjoy some happiness in this life at least have entered other religions. Those that are thus deserting the Saivite religion amount to lakhs" - etc. (Translated).

Is it not unfortunate, even if it is not impertinent, that you should advise these "poor brethren" of the oppressed classes – Saivites according to you for ststistical purposes – that you should ask them to build separate temples for their worship and not use "your" temples where you worship not your Gods, but the Gods of this earth? Is it not a little unreasonable, entirely uncharitable, and totally subversive of the first fundamental of your Saivisim that "God is love"?; a sheer waste of your educated enthusiasm that you should prevent by thought, word or deed, these oppressed classes from entering these temples for

worship, please, and for nothing else? Then why do you sit up and howl? Why do you accuse Brahmins thus? "What ever savours of cosmopolitanism in Saivite Temples is discouraged by Smartha worshippers" Is it true? Is it honest?

The Smartha worshipper cares a brass farthing for your Saivite temples or who goes and worships therein. "In India", wrote Sir. H.K. Beauchamp in one of his notes in editing the Memoirs of the Abbe Dubois, "we see the grossest forms of superstition side by side with the most wonderfully refined system of philosophy. The philosophic Brahmin contends that it is ridiculous to try to inculcate into the common and uneducated herd the subtler forms of doctrine. Hence the various forms of idolatrous worship". Substitute "*Saivite*" for Brahmin and it will hold equally well. Ask Mr. E. V. Ramasami of Erode who led the Satyagraha at Suchindram temple as well. The Brahmin is always only in the background. It is your ignorant Non-Brahmin Saivite and men with the like mentality who create all the bother. The Saivite is worse, infinitely worse in religious bigotry and is a source of immense trouble and a huge stumbling block to all progress. If Nemesis is going to overtake Saivism, no right thinking man will regret it. On the other hand, it will be all to the good of the country.

I can do no better than quote a few lines from Mr. R. J. Minney's proscribed book "Siva or the Future of India" (taken from the *Illustrated Weekly of India* dated 7th April 1929):

"Within the next hundred years India can be the greatest and most prosperous country in the world; She has three times the population of United States, untold mineral wealth, tremendous agricultural possibilities ... all can be made predominant in the world markets. Britain can secure India this future, But Britain is too hesitant. Left to herself India can accomplish nothing. The three hundred million people have neither the wish nor the will to attain predominance or prosperity. Caste, religion and sex are the most formidable barriers in the obstacle race. Drastic action for reform will have to be undertaken. Religion will have to be purged of its impurities. Material ambitions must be infused into the people. Persuasion or propaganda can achieve nothing at all. The same stern methods that brought about abolition of *suttee* can alone effect the cure here.

And today where does Saivism stand? "God is love"; they sing in Hate. Your God said, your Siva said, "Let there be light"! And what happened?

And there was Darkness! That is modern educated Saivism and its last refuge happens to be Tinnevelly seemingly.

Some more Light please, and not more Darkness. Don't disagree with your God.

- *Revolt*, 1, 8, 15 May 1929

Self-Respect Saivites Conference, Pattukottai

The above Conference was held at Pattukottai in the Traveller's Bungalow on the 26th May, under the Presidency of Mr. S. Murugappan, Editor, *Kumaran*. The President was proposed and seconded by more than two representatives for each district in the province. There was a very large gathering of Self-respecting Saivites. Mr. N. Dandapani, Chairman of the Reception Committee delivered a humorous but instructive speech on the priest-ridden and Puranic Saivism that is obtaining today and condemned the narrow outlook of the present day Saivites.

The President traced the origin and history of Saivism, cited innumerable instances of the catholicity of its views and showed how the present day Saivites are not the real Saivites at all. He criticised the ill intentioned attitude taken by the Saivites at Tinnevelly and Cuddalore. Saivism, the religion of pure 'love' has swerved from its main tenets, and has degenerated into outward show of ashes and bead. He held that those references and expressions in the Saivite books which are calculated to wound the feelings of any living being, and which are calculated to spread the baneful spirit of intolerance, ought to be immediately removed. He dwelt upon the various aspects of Saivism and proved how all of them are in perfect consonance with the aims of the Self - respect movement.

The following resolutions were passed:

a) This Conference resolves that all those who subscribe to its views without any distinction of caste, or religion, shall become members of the Self respect Saivites League which preaches the real Saivite creed, viz "Siva is Love"

(b) This Conference informs the public that the resolutions passed at the Tinnevelly and Cuddalore Conferences by narrow minded people will not in any way bind the true Saivites.

(c) This Conference resolves that a true Saivite need not necessarily wear the ashes and the beads, which are nothing but mere outward show.

(d) This Conference resolves that all people, without distinction of caste or religion who desire to worship the image may have entrance into the Saivite temples.

(e) This Conference congratulates the Erode Devasthanam Committee for its resolution in favour of temple entry for all and also congratulates Messrs. Eswaran, Pasupathy and Karuppan, for having boldly acted upon it.

(f) This Conference resolves that those references and passages which are antagonistic to the "love" creed of the real Saivism, and which are revolting to our commonsense, ought to be deleted, and fresh editions should be published with a view to encourage and enrich the literature.

(g) This Conference enjoins upon the Self-respect Saivites to sacrifice their all, for the purpose of establishing the real Saivism, which is nothing but "love", in the place of the false one which is existing today.

(h) This Conference resolves that the next Self-respect Saivites Conference shall be held at Trichinopoly, and the following gentlemen shall be requested to be the members of the Reception committee (with powers to co-opt) :

Messrs. Mani Tirunavukkarasu Mudaliar, Madras; C. Chidambaram Pillai, Vakil, Kovilpatti: T. Thirukutasundaram, M.A., B.L. Tinnevelly; N.M. Selvakkanapathi, Puvalur; K. A. P. Viwswnathan, Trichy; Mayuramani R. Chinnaiah, Karugudi; A. R. Ramanatha Desikar, Tinnevelly; N. Dhandapani, Chidambaram; S. Guruswami, Sholavandan; A. R. Sivanandam, Coimbatore; V.S. Sivagnana Desikar, Tinnevelly ; C. A. Aiyamuthu, Coimbatore; Swami Chidambaranar, Rajamatam and S. Murugappar, Karaikkudi.

– *Revo*lt, 5 June 1929

Saivism – An Exposure

(By P. C. P)

Who is a Saivite? And What is Saivism?

Some twenty years ago in Travancore we started defining who a Tamilian was – we have not arrived at any settlement till now.

The initial difficulty is to define a Saivite and Saivism. Sometimes it denotes a caste or sub-caste; at other times it denotes a religion; at a third it denotes a system of philosophy. It may be all three at the same time. It may indicate a Vellala or not; it may indicate a vegetarian or non-vegetarian. At one time it may even have denoted a Brahmin as undoubtedly it did; but one is afraid whether it does now.

Before we proceed any further let us be clear upon one or two points first. Leaving out the question of caste for the present and taking into account the religion of the Saivite, a well known Tamil Saiva Siddhanta scholar, now no more, said :-

"The majority of every people and nation are virtually atheistic and materialistic, though professing a belief in God and conforming to the usages of society". That is as true of the ordinary Saivite community as of any other. This has been endorsed by other Saivite scholars as well. The ignorance of the Tamil Saivite public in religious matters has been placed beyond controversy. Such being the case and the Self-respect movement being a mass movement there is nothing offensive when it is accused of being ignorant; nay even when it is said to be composed of Nasthigars or Atheists. Under the eclectic Hindu religious system the worst Atheist may be a very good Hindu – provided there was a profession of a belief in any Hindu God, and provided there was the observance of the caste or social usages. This is what Mrs. Besant meant when the spoke of "the Hindu's principle of rigidity of conduct and freedom of thought". This is known as eclectic Hinduism. It may mean anything or nothing.

Practical religion always falls short of the ideal that is the case with every religion. There is what is known as "the dull level" of the religionist. Each religionist in this essentially materialistic world most often attempts what his co-religionist does, rather than understand and appreciate his religion itself, and there it ends.

The ideal is always sought only by the intellectual few. They are in a

minority; and necessarily they must be. First there is the question of leisure; secondly mental equipment and philosophic bent; thirdly religious fervour.

The intellectual Saivites who are forced by circumstances to be in a minority; they are philosophers, most of them, they are exponents of our famous Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, which has been evolved as a science out of the Saivite religion as it existed more than a thousand years ago.

If, as admitted, ignorance is the monopoly of the majority of Saivites and we of the Self-respect movement can candidly say we are in that majority, then the intellectual Saivites – a mere handful – will feel provoked by our very presence. That is only reasonable. Intellect, especially the tabloid intellect of the inelastic type, is always impatient at the sight of ignorance.

But, as they say, misfortunes never come single. The Saivite intelligentsia have been sour long before the 'ignorant' Self-respect movement appeared on the field. To put it shortly intellectual Saivism met with treachery from all sides.

While Brahmin Saivites and Vellala Saivites joined hands and fought like brothers in putting down Jainism, we find the self same Brahmins leave the Saiva fold and flocking round Sankaracharya who had evolved a magnificent and at the same time a very convenient philosophy and that out of Buddhism which was also ruthlessly suppressed.

Thus Smarthaism permitted a good deal of elasticity of conduct to its followers while leaving to the Saivities all the rigidity as of old. The result was, the Smarthas benefited materially and politically as later events showed.

The Saivites in order to treasure up their philosophy founded Mutts on the monastic pattern of the Jains and Buddhists and now disaster has overtaken the Saivite and his philosophy here also.

These Adhinams (*Saivite mutts – editors*) of today were our old Annamalai Universities – for promulgating our Saivite religion and Saivite philosophy. Today when we think of our Saiva Adhinams we, Saivities have to hang down our heads in very shame. These Adhinams have fallen among others under the political and legal influence of Smarthaism. Inculcation of Saivite philosophy, is today at any rate, not within the curriculum of these Adhinams. Years ago one angry Saivite,

Arumuga Navalar consigned these Adhinams to hell-fire. Nothing happened to the Adhinams at any rate; perhaps there was no fire in hell.

Our temples have become 'dens of prostitution' and our Mutts have become 'dens of iniquity'. Of course, there are a very few honourable exceptions though unimportant.

With the disappearance of Saiva Siddhanta Universities for propagating our philosophy, our Saiva religion also fell under the spell of Smarthaism or Brahminism. Thus far Saiva Religion and Philosophy.

Let us for a moment turn to Tamil Literature. From that glorious moment when Brahmins and Vellalas banded themselves together to root out the Jain, nemesis overtook Tamil literature also. Associations – religious and literary – led to translation and admiration and even servility. One very ardent Saivite, in his enthusiasm for Sanskrit, even went the length of saying that he was ashamed of the Tamil language. For centuries together, under the auspices of Saivism and the influence of Brahminism, Tamil quite willingly and very meekly submitted itself to a second place by the side of Sanskrit until it was retrieved by an English Missionary of honoured name – Dr. Caldwell among others.

This servile and meaningless admiration of the Saivite for Brahminism has led to the offering of the deepest insult to Dravidian culture and genius. Atrocities committed by the unholy Brahmin-Vellala combine upon Jains and Buddhists, especially Jains, came to be faithfully recorded in the Tamil Puranas. The revolting story as it stands must be historically untrue or grossly exaggerated; if true, the verdict of the historian today will be that the Brahmins and Vellalas of those times must have been a set of bloodthirsty ruffians. But were they really? It cannot even now be subjected to criticism because these silly stories are contained in the Puranas and therefore they have become sacred.

The same dodge was tried with Ramayana as well – I am dealing with it subsequently. If this canon of literary and historical criticism as regards sacerdotal literature was accepted, it would just mean, that no literary work of any importance, which appeared within the last 1500 years in Tamil can be criticized at all, for there was practically no literary work of any merit after that period which was not religious and which was not, therefore, sacred.

The admiration of the Vellala Saivite for Brahmanism reached its highest

water mark when it was bluntly laid down that Tamil was born of Sanskrit.

It did not stop here; it also laid down that Saiva Siddhanta system was Aryan in inception and genius and not Dravidian at all. The joke is complete when you remember that the foundations of Tamil Saivism are laid deep in Sanskrit. And it is all the Vellala Saivite who did it. For fear of getting drowned in lay criticism and appreciation for safety's sake, the Tamil Vellala Saivite jumped into the Sanskrit Smartha well. The body is now claimed by both.

Now what is the net result of it all? The intellectual Saivite, at best in a hopelessly microscopic minority, has been deserted by his academies or Adhinams; has been deserted by his old militant religious allies, the Smartha Brahmins; not merely that the self same Brahmin adopted a new philosophy diametrically opposed to Saiva Siddhantam. The tale continues. The Brahmin has wrested the temples from the Saivites. And on the top of it, both Tamil literature and Tamil religion are at the intellectual and literacy mercy of the Smartha Brahmin.

Have we seen the end of it? No. The political power today is with the Brahmin. A thousand years ago it might have been with the Vellala. With the Jain fratricide, that political power of the Vellala disappeared. He was made to pull the chestnuts out of the fire by the Brahmin and for the Brahmin. The power of the Vellala since then has been *a benami* – he has been a bare name lender; he is today also, that and nothing else.

Within the last century with his political power, a fresh impetus has been given to Smartha intellect and Smartha religion: while the Saivite was hanging on to his old rigidity – his exclusiveness; his isolated splendour.

Publicity of Smarthaism

Look at the tours undertaken by the Smartha Guru, Sankaracharya. They are being undertaken mainly for the purpose of impressing Smarthaism upon the ignorant masses. Who are the disciples who bear the palanquin? A Smartha District Collectors; a District Judge or two, the lesser fry; the shining lights or the bar; the elite of society. He becomes and has become the Loka-guru. The Vellala Saivite who is spoiling him anywhere, does the next best thing – spends it upon the Smartha Guru: and no doubt feels immensely pleased with himself.

His Smartha friends, the elite of society, admire his Saivism, his Asthigam: his many qualities of head and heart. He is in their good books. The Saiva Vellala at his own expense feeds many a Brahmin, most of them better placed than himself.

In Travancore, during Car festivals, when the car has to be pulled leaves are spread inside the temples. It is a splendid feast which is to take place – the best of its kind: the grandest. You go on pulling: they go on eating. If you don't pull, you may be fined by the Government; if they don't eat, the Government offices responsible for it may be fined. It is even handed Justice.

This tour business of Sri Sankaracharya, is publicity stunt No.1 of the Smarthas.

Take the Yajnam sacrifice, for instance. It is another publicity stunt indulged in by the Smarthas. That also is intended and performed to impress the power and prestige of Smarthaism upon the Saivite public. Such a Yajna sacrifice is opposed to the very life principle of Saivisam and temple worship. Not a single Saivite Vellala has come forward to condemn it, as he is bound to do, by his very religion. Without feeling hypocritical, we may say Brahmins now a days are not so unused to non-vegetable food, that there is really no necessity to demonstrate that if meal is partaken it is only during a sacrifice and that also in the lime-light. It deceives nobody, least of all the Brahmins themselves. It is part of the Brahmin publicity programme.

It is again this publicity stunt which has made the Madras Brahmin take up Varnashrama Dharmam also. What is the Varnam of the Madras Brahmin? Has he any? And what is the Madras Brahmins' Dharmam? Job-hunting? Echo answers "what?"

What prevents the Varanshramites from inviting respectable Vellala Saivites to their Conferences? Why can't they go together and work together as of old, when they hunted down Jains? Why waste energy, money and time in holding separate Conferences – Saivite Conferences and Varnashrama Dharma Conferences? Why could not they pool their resources in hunting down a common enemy even more dangerous than the Jain? Why should these two respectable parties be suspected of working collusively, secretly and in the dark? Why could not they come out jointly into the open and fight the Self-respect movement, if they really mean fight? Here again the old Brahmin treachery is at work. The Varnashramite makes no mention of the Self-respect

movement in his conferences, even though he scents the danger to his prestige and power. It is our friend the Vellala Saivite who is made to do it as of old; the Saivite is made to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. The Vellala Saivite gets the kicks; the half-pence goes to the Brahmin.

What I have stated hitherto must establish one thing; the longstanding enemy of the Saivite and his only enemy is *not* the follower of the Self-respect movement. It is his own crony, his chum, his bosom friend, his mental preceptor and his moral guide – the Smartha Brahmin; who has brought the Saivite Vellala to this predicament – a house divided within itself.

It does not suppose that the Saivite Conferences were directly aimed at our movement. At any rate, I do not think my friend Mr. Sachidanandam Pillai is privy to it. These views which have been ventilated recently in the Saiva Conferences have been held by him long earlier than the appearance of our movement itself. But, at the same time, it cannot be denied that these Saivite Conferences were extremely inopportune and ill timed though possibly well intentioned: but out of tune with the present Dravidian Renaissance.

What I have been aiming hitherto to establish was, that there should be no split among the Saivites; that all of us can join together and can stand together on the same platform. There is and there can be no antagonism as among the Saivites themselves.

If the intellectual Saivite wants a philosophy and a religion both of which he has lost, let him make a new system, a new philosophy and new religion out of the Self-respect movement. Let him bury the old effete benami affair of a Saiva Siddhantam. At any rate it badly wants overhauling.

Apples were falling to the ground even before Newton discovered his principle of gravitation – and falling since. The earth was going round, the sun even before Galileo discovered it. Einstein's theory of Relativity is likely to explode Newton's principle of Gravitation. But no mathematician will dare say that Einstein's theory should not be accepted because he is a Jew or because by custom and usage they are acquainted only with Newton's law of Gravitation. Science must progress, philosophy must progress. Let Saivite genius which founded that universal religion Siva Siddhantam, found another, suited to the times, the spirit and the mood of the community. That we gladly welcome. That will be the Dawn of a new era for the Tamils and the Saivites – for

Dravidian culture and genius.

Saivites who accept the Self-respect programme are not going to enter too deeply into the quagmire of religious controversy. It is barren. It leads to nothing. And it profits nobody. In so far as religion is concerned, they remember the lines of the Persian poet, as well as our old Siddhars:-

Myself when young did eagerly frequent

Doctor and Saint and heard great Argument

About it and about: but evermore

Came out by the same Doors as in I went.

It must not be forgotten that we are Saivites: and as such interested in the good name of our religion. If we are to be fixed with a religion, we shall have the best of it and not an intellectual nor a Brahminical refuse. We are Hindus. As Hindus and as Saivites, we have the right to criticize both Hinduism and Saivism if they are open to it.

Gautama the Buddha was a 'Hindu of Hindus and the best of Hindus'; Mahavira, the founder of Jainism was a Hindu; Jesus Christ was a Jew; Martin Luther, who originated Protestantism, was a Roman Catholic. And today we are all of us Saivites.

Why, Gautama the Enlightened was treated by Brahmin Pandits in later days not only as a Hindu but the very incarnation of the God Vishnu himself. If we can help it, our ambition is to be Saivities in the best sense of the word. The great Siddhars of South India have been our forerunners. We are wearing part of their mantle also.

Castes and Outcastes

Let us for a moment go back to the days when the present castes began in South India, and see what Saivism was like before caste began. It need not be pointed out that historians are groping in the dark about this period. It is also a long story but a short sketch may be attempted.

During the beginning of the Christian era or thereabout, during the last Sangham period, during what is known as the Augustan period of Tamil literature, during those days Saivism was a very tolerant religion, as were Buddhism and Jainism which existed side by side and in friendly rivalry, with it. This is evident from the glorious epic of Manimekalai where it is described how discourses on all religious faiths were given by their respective followers in the same hall for the

benefit of the masses without any of the bitterness at all that we now find in religious controversies. It goes without saying that such a system must have had a tremendous educative value not only to the general masses but to the teachers and also to the sovereign.

Similarly in the Hindu Kingdom of Java in the 14th century, A.D. Dr. Chatterjee writing in May 1929, Modern Review, quotes Prapancha, contemporary historian, "East of it (in Mapapahit capital of Java) is a place where the Shaiva and Buddhist priests speak and argue about their doctrines".

In those days Saivism was broad-based upon toleration and love and it was bound to be such, because of association with the two most humane religions in the world – Buddhism and Jainism. Because of such association and even otherwise, Saivism was casteless in South India's most glorious period of existence.

It was a friendly and healthy rivalry between the several religious persuasions which existed in South India.

Look at Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar himself. He was Jain; his sister was a Saivite. He himself has sung how even when he was a Jain, "he never ceased worshipping at time with water and flowers, water representing purity and sincerity and flowers love." And he was something of a religious turncoat.

It was while this friendly relationship was subsisting in South India, that Brahminism was revived in North India. That revival was militant and violent. And those methods were also introduced in the South. North India set the fashion for the South, in the matter of introduction or reformation of the caste religion and literature too.

This marks the turning point in South Indian history. It was from the time of this Brahminical revivalism, the main characteristic of which was ritualism, that a social system on the analogy of the North Indian Caste; Saivism with the violent propaganda of the north; a literature, founded on a mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil necessitated by contact, a literature also came into existence.

What happened when caste was introduced in South India? The Tamil Andanars or Adi-Saivites whoever they were became Brahmins: and they began to think and act as thought they were made in the very image of the Arya-Brahmins of the North. Nobody would be prepared to accept them either as Aryas or as Brahmins of the North: stripped of their

holy thread which also is misleading and with some slight tonsorial changes, the Dikshitars of Chidambaram and the Mookani Brahmins of Tiruchendur will look like any of us, Dravidians.

Commensurate with their vanity, the rules of the time, small and big, were provided by Brahmins with genealogies which took them to the sun and moon, as in the North. The status of the Vellalas who seem then to have been the politically dominant class was nebulous. Upon the length of their purse and the strength of their arms, those Vellalas under the new caste system, were permitted by the Brahmins to be Sudras or become "good" Sudras, Vaisyas and even Kshatriyas. It was then also that the outcastes in South India came to be formed.

Thus with the advent of militant Saivism, at any rate contemporaneously with it, was introduced the castes and outcastes in South India also.

In order that it may not appear that these are mere fancies born of Non-Brahmin prejudice, it may be fair to see what a Brahmin writer of some distinction himself has to say about it.

"Before the arrival of the Aryans there was no caste system in the Tamil country… The Tamil Kings alone were elevated to the rank of Kshatriyas in spite of their marriage connections with the ancient Velir or Vellala tribes. These Velirs were on that account called Ilangokkal or Minor Kings. The Brahmins got up for them very decent genealogies which traced their ancestry to the sun, moon or the fire. This rendered the position of the Vellalas who had to oscillate between the Vaisya and Sudra castes, dubious and unsettled."

Casteless Tamil Nadu became Caste-ridden Tamil Nadu with the advent of Brahminical Saivism.

Then began in South India that violent religious propaganda on behalf of Brahmino-Saivism – a propaganda which has staggered humanity. Saivism become Brahminical then and it is Brahminical today; for Saivism, as apart from and stripped of Brahminism cannot for a moment stand on its own legs.

In carrying on that propaganda, Brahmins and Vellalas under the auspices of St.Gnanasambhanda and Tirunavukarasu joined hands in putting down Jainism.

We must know something of this Hindu warfare against Jainism, and what fate overlook the later – in order to understand how the outcastes came into existence in Hindu society.

A century ago the Frenchman, the learned Abbe Dubois wrote:

"Brahminism underwent a hard struggle before it succeeded in establishing its dominion in India, owing to the opposition offered to it by the Jains; but after a long and bloody war, the latter were crushed *and had to submit to whatever conditions the Brahmins chose to dictate*. The jealousies and animosities which these religious wars stirred up still prevail as strongly as ever, even after the lapse of thousand years. Time, which softens the strongest hatreds and brings together the greatest enemies, has, in this case, failed to obliterate the traces of the ancient wrongs of which each sect mutually accuses the other. The daily prayer of a certain sect of Brahmins contains a curse leveled at the heads of the Jains who retaliate by exclaiming when they rise to pray: "Brahma Kshayam"– "May the Brahmin Perish."

"The immediate cause of this rupture was the introduction of Yajnam – sacrifice at which some living creature must be immolated. A ram is the victim usually offered… The sacrifice of Yajnam is, in the opinion of its advocates, the most meritorious sacrifice of any. It is considered extremely acceptable to the Gods; and the person who offers or causes it to be offered, may count on abundant temporal blessings and on the entire remission of the sins which he has committed for hundred generations. Furthermore Brahmins possess the exclusive privilege of performing this sacrifice. Other castes may not even be present at it, though by a special grace they are authorized to provide the means of carrying it out.

It is only very recently that such a sacrifice has been carried out by Brahmins in South India inspite of protests from the Humanitarian Society of the place. Another interesting thing to remember is that this sacrifice was held in Conjeevaram of all places. When Hieun Tsang, the Chinese Buddhist traveler visited Conjeevaram in 640 A.D., "there were in that city 100 Buddhist Monasteries with about 10,000 Brethren (Monks) and about 80 temples, the majority of which belonged to the Digambara Jains." Conjeevaram in the 7th century A.D. was one of the strongholds of Buddhism and Jainism.

In the old days, such a sacrifice would have led to bloodshed, says the Abbe Dubois: "The Yajnam Sacrifice, the Jains contend, is directly opposed to the most sacred and inviolable principles of the Hindu religion which forbids the destruction of any living thing, for any reason or an any pretext whatever."

"From that moment things came rapidly to a climax; and it was then that the defenders of the pure primitive religion took the name of Jains and formed themselves into a distinct sect composed of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. They were the descendants of the Hindus of all Castes who originally banded themselves together to oppose the innovations of the Brahmins and they alone have preserved the religion of their forefathers intact to the present day."

This development of Jainism must be interesting to the followers of the Self-respect movement. And what happened next? The Abbe continues, "After the schism the, Jains or true believers, perpetually taunted the Brahmins with their debased religion and what at first merely furnished subject matter for scholastic disputes finally became the cause of long and bloody hospitalities. For a long time success was on the side of the Jains but in the end, the majority of the Kshatriyas and other castes having seceded and adopted the innovations of the Brahmins, the latter gained the ascendant and reduced their adversaries to the lowest depths of subjection. They overthrew all the temples of the Jains, destroyed the objects of their cult, deprived them of all freedom, both religious and civil, and banished them from public employment and all positions of trust; in fact, they persecuted them to such an extent that they succeeded in removing nearly all traces of these formidable antagonists in several provinces where formerly they had been most flourishing". Substitute Vellala for "Kshatriyas and other castes" in the above and you will see how outcastes came into existence in South India.

On account of the violent militant propaganda carried out by the Brahmin-Saivite combine, Jainism was wiped off the face of the earth in South India. Perhaps it was not dissimilar to that memorable campaign carried on by Tippu Sultan of Mysore on the West Coast of Malabar. His cry was "Islam or the Sword". St. Gnananasambandar's cry must have been "Saivism or the gibbet". It might have been pure bluff; but it had its effect. The effect was historically tremendous. It led to the formation or rather segregation of the millions of outcastes whom we find even today.

Those who stood out of this Brahmin-Saivite propaganda; those who happened to be dissenters such of the Jains and also Buddhists who might have refused to surrender their conscience; those who did not count politically in importance or who did not obey the political

religion were thrown out of the pale of society; became outcastes; untouchables; with no cognizable religion; with no place for worship; with no wealth, for they would have been deprived of it; with no temples, for theirs would have been taken over by the Brahmin-Saivaites (as historical research is now disclosing it); with no literature, which was ruthlessly suppressed; with no Monks and no monasteries. Remember the phrase of the Frenchman: "reduced to the lowest depths of subjection". Those noble sons and daughters of Tamil land were reduced to the position of slaves.

Is this theory pure fancy? Let us examine existing arrangements in caste and religion among those who are called Hindus and verify the above theory.

Puranas & Ithihasas

They are said to be sacred books; literary works; and historical narratives. No religion and no religious work, however literary and however historical it may be, will stand if in this twentieth century, it runs away from honest criticism. No religion is worth having, worth preserving or worth espousing if it will not brook criticism. If Saivism has not been in recent times criticized so very strongly or violently it has been the loss of Saivism rather than its gain. If Saivism is dying out, it is because it was not sufficiently criticized, its weaknesses removed and its good points strengthened. It has had hitherto a very sheltered career; it was coddled too much; it was wrapped up in wool; today the slightest sneeze upsets the whole Saivaite system. The net result of it is in the struggle for existence, Saivism goes under. The first great essential of any religion to survive, in this materialistic world, is the capacity to receive hard knocks. You must think of what Padikkas Thambiran, the last of the great Tamil poets, said of Tamil Scholarship when it went a begging for want of a critic of the old vigorous type. That is just the matter with Saivism today.

Some of our "Asthiga" opponents complain bitterly of the Self-respect movement that the followers of the latter are criticizing the Ramayana and lowering the prestige of Sri Rama in the confidence of the public. Why, one journal went the length of throwing out the characteristically ill mannered gibe: "the self-respecters like the Rakshasas and Asuras of the Ramayana try to set at naught all the time honored customs and practices of the Asthiga Hindus and would gain a victory as Ravana and his company had at the hands of Sri Rama.". Another journal

wanted the self-respecters to be placed under arrest because when Pundit Malavaiya wanted the Ezhava audience at Kottayam to recite Rama Nama, the audience shouted "Ravana-ki-jai", The Ezhavas claim they have come from Ezham or the Lanka of Ravana.

If only our opponents knew any thing about the history of this critical study of the Ramayana they would not have indulged in such kind of literary trash. For one thing the self-respecters are in no way responsible for this criticism of the Ramayana at all. I quite concede that with a critical study of the Ramayana, the Dravidian renaissance was started in South India but then it was not Mr. E.V.Ramasami or his present day followers who started that critical study.

I may be pardoned if I go into the question with some detail as with the beginning of that controversy, the foundations of the present day self-respect movement may be said in part to have been actually laid.

The New Renaissance the Dravidian Revolt, the parent of the Self-respect movement originated in Tinnevellly. Please remember that. And note further, the far more important thing that the mischief was started – our opponents will agree that it was a mischief – this unheard of mischief was started by Saivaite Vellalas.

You ought to know Rao Bahadur V. P. Subramanian Mudaliar of Vellakkal, in this district, the distinguished Tamil scholar and poet. He published in Tamil more than twenty five years ago a critical study of the Ramayana based upon the impressions of a conversation he had with the late Professor Sundaram Pillai of Travancore, the author of 'Manonmanyam.'

This is how the Preface read: "I may without vanity be allowed to say that I am behind few of my countrymen in point of religious fervour. Some of my views may seem irreligious at first but a careful and scientific examination of the same will show that they are not actually so. Caste system and religion are not necessarily connected with each other. So my ideas of caste may differ from those of others without in any way affecting the common religious sentiments. My views on the Ramayana have no concern with religion."

In spite of the protest underlying it, this preface of Mr. Mudaliar would show that caste and religion always stood together even though Mr. Mudaliar thought differently and risked it. It was rank heresy in those days when the Brahmin was ruling the roost to have talked of caste or

religion except with bated breath. Mr. Mudaliar was extremely careful to avoid giving offence to the 'common religious sentiment' as he called it.

Mr. T. Ponnambalam Pillai the G.O.M. of Travancore Saivaite Vellala published Mr. Mudaliar's study of the Ramayana in the now defunct Malabar Quarterly Review edited by another Travancore Saivaite Vellala.

Mr. T. Ponnambalam Pillai wrote: "They (Professor Sundaram Pillai's opinions) have been portrayed with Boswellian fidelity in Tamil and published posthumously by Mr.V. P. Subramanian Mudaliar, one of the Professor's admirers and himself no mean thinker on social and allied questions. I have taken the liberty to give the substance an English garb"

Mr. Pillai further added: "It must be stated at the outset that the learned Professor had no faith in the authenticity of the story of Ramayana. He was of the opinion that it was meant to proclaim the prowess of the Aryans and represent their rivals and enemies, the Dravidians who had attained a high degree of civilization at that period in the worst possible colour."

In the Ramayana, you have the vilest the most characteristic and despicable attempt of the Aryan to cry down the Dravidian, his civilization, his culture, his genius, his society, his customs and manners – an attempt which has persisted down the ages till today.

In the days when I was performing the Sraddha of my parents through the good offices of a Brahmin Purohit, he made me repeat in Tamil at the end of it all what till then was conducted in a language known to neither of us, he made me repeat word for word, something like this: "even though what I give you now is very small and insignificant and unworthy of you, you will be generous enough to receive it as something noble and grand." Of course, I repeated it, word for word. Look at the Brahmin's way of doing it – I knew that my Brahmin Purohit was going straight to his concubine's house with the rather for me, costly thing I had given him to be dispatched through his agency to my parents in the other world. But then it was the religion which I had imbibed and which prevailed then and even now does.

The attempt to foist Ramayana as a sacred thing upon the Dravidians is not dissimilar to that of the Brahmin Purohit I have just mentioned.

Now one can understand why when the Aryan Brahmin gentleman Pundit Malaviya instead of suggesting ways and means for removing untouchablity called upon the Ezhavas or Tiyyas of Travancore assembled at Kottayam to recite Rama Nama, and why because they were wide awake they went in for Ravana Nama out of sheer self-respect. In Dravidian India today Rama Nama is an insult; but of course the learned Pundit was not aware of it.

To go back to our main line, this critical study of the Ramayana by the Saivaite Vellala leaders, though it was professedly historical and not at all religious, yet brought forth a very formidable Brahmin opponent. That was the late Sir. T. Sadasiva Aiyar who was then Chief Justice of Travancore. By the time this Brahmin attack was over poor Mr. Ponnambalam Pillai was counting his bones and his bruises. Mr. Pillai was then holding one of the highest offices in Travancore, as was Mr. Aiyer then chief justice of that same state.

Mr. Pillai had to cry out in anguish "I least expected so furious but pointless attack from the pen of Mr. Sadasiva Aiyer, the talented Chief Justice of Travancore who is known for his perfect equanimity of temper and who never until now permitted it to be ruffled by anything, as became an arbiter of Justice in the Highest Court of the kingdom. I also regret that in the heat of the fight he should have so forgotten himself as to introduce into the arena of discussion, a large number of unparliamentary expressions (about 4 in number besides unlimited invectives)." You see Mr. Pillai had counted it.

Mr. Sadasiva Aiyer, later on became a Judge of the High Court of Judicature at Madras and was afterwards the President of the H.R.E.Board. For a Brahmin he was a Catholic minded man of very advanced views, highly talented end deeply religious. And yet this is how Mr. Ponnambalam Pillai fared at his hands – an estimable Brahmin gentleman and a very mild historical controversy.

This bring to our memory the varied and cultured language employed by respectable and educated Brahmin councilors of the Madras Corporation towards the President who is a respected Non-Brahmin leader in connection with the visit of the Simon Commission.

The strongest point about the Brahmin is his rich vocabulary – that was noticed a century ago by Abbe Dubois. "If the language of the Brahmins" wrote the Frenchman, "is rich in gracious and flattering

expressions, it is even more so in abuse and coarse indecent invective. Though they pride them selves on their courtesy and knowledge of the world when they lose their temper they are no better than our lowest rag-pickers; and an incredible quantity of disgusting and obscene language pours from their mouths on such occasions."

There is something even more interesting in this Ramayana controversy. A cultured gentleman like Sir T. Sadasiva Aiyar actually stated "that some evil spirit from the (nether) world impelled Mr. Pillai to open the article". And Mr. Ponnambalam Pillai laid the flattering unction unto his soul:- "It is however gratifying to me that my reviewer (meaning Mr. Sadasiva Aiyar) credits me with the Saiva Siddhandantha faith." It does not look like anything creditable.

This Brahmin attack was as unwarranted as it was impertinent. Such is the case whenever a Brahmin attacks. After this attack, after such an assault by a Brahmin gentleman of 'repute, culture and equanimity of temper' is it any wonder that some of our critics who can neither understand nor appreciate what Dravidian culture is, should fall foul of the self- respecters for criticizing the Ramayana?

And these critics of ours are not Brahmins, either; Dravidian blood is still running in their veins, so they say. I have already indicated how the Brahmins have gone into hiding. They dare not criticize the self - respect movement. They know they are being ruthlessly exposed. The shrewd people that they are they feel that their game is up. But not our "Asthiga brethren" who are still under the influence of Brahmin soporifics.

At about this time of very active research into the historicity of Ramayana, another independent investigator came to a very interesting conclusion about Saivism and Brahmanism based upon a study of Ramayana. This has a considerable bearing upon the evolution of modern Saivism.

Says Mr. Nanu Pillai, B.A.: "The Vedic Brahmin never worshipped Siva. The name of Siva is not even mentioned in the oldest parts of the Vedas. The contempt in which this deity was held by the Brahmins may be seen from the fact that even to this day they do not partake of the food placed at the alter of Siva. The reason alleged for this attitude of the Brahmin is that Siva was a Brahmin-killer. What does this mean? If it means anything at all it is that Siva was a god of another religion entirely opposed to and subversive of Brahminism".

Ravana as every child knows was a Siva bhakta. Saivism was Dravidian and Dravidian Saivism was opposed to Brahmanism.

In spite of the protests and professions by the Saivaite Vellalas, the Brahmin gentlemen were not quite satisfied with their cultural intentions. The learned Brahmins saw that the study of Ramayana was merely the beginning of the Dravidian Revolt.

Mr. Sadasiva Aiyar said long ago – mark there words – "The ambition of many of my Southern Vellala friends and of the so-called non Brahmin portion of our community in Southern portion of India to cut themselves entirely adrift now from Sri Rama and Sri Krishna and the Sanskrit Vedas and the Tiruvaimozhi, Prabandham and to rise a standard of revolt on a pure Tamil Saivaite, anti Brahmin and non Aryan basis, is, if I may be permitted to say so, another wild goose chase." It is not a wild goose chase, but a terrible reality, the flaming self-respect movement.

I would not have cared to drag this moth-eaten controversy out of the dust in which it has lain buried till now but that it fully justifies the position I have taken up till now.

The point at which I was, before I entered upon this, perhaps tiresome, digression was that there can be nowadays no shutting out of criticism of any work. Profane or sacred, Puranas or Ithikasas, all these and the likes are within the rule and as open to criticism as my other.

The main practical planks in our platform are three in number. (1) intermarriage including widow-marriage (2) interdining and (3) temple-entry – all three for all the Hindus who are within the Caste and those outside it, without any distinction whatever. These are our practical demands. There can be no ambiguity about those demands. And whoever is not with us in these essentials is against us. We shall neither ask for nor give any quarter in these three fundamentals – which are instinctively Dravidian. But it is our plain duty to warn everybody who is interested in Hindu Social and religious reform to drop that general air of arrogance and superiority towards the so called Untouchables and Depressed Classes which is so very irritating and painful to witness.

I may tell you that caste arrogance and superiority is based on ignorance. The Saivite Vellalas as also all the Caste Hindus must be prepared to shed their scales from their eyes. The so-called Untouchables and

Depressed Classes are progressing in such rapid strides; and it is a mere question of time whether they may not, very shortly, become the foremost community in all India – as in justice and fairness they very well deserve to.

If you want to gain some idea of the tremendous advance made by some of these people against innumerable odds, you must go to the Tiyyas or Ezhavas of the West Coast. It is there you come across the worst type of untouchability, unimaginable, unforgettable, a thousand times worse than slavery. That was the condition of the Tiyyas or Ezhavas till about twenty-five years ago.

Today the Ezhavas are a homogeneous community numbering about 20 lakhs of people. It is very rarely you can come across an illiterate man or woman among them. There are hundreds and hundreds of eminent scholars in Malayalam and Sanskrit. Under the guidance of their Guruswamy, the late Sainted Narayana Guru, to whom they showed unswerving allegiance they have consecrated more than fifty temples right throughout the West Coast; they have taken to educating themselves with zest; they are the most industrious community in the South; they have in spite of obstacles, unheard of elsewhere, to their entry into public schools, have now many great men who have attained considerable distinction in science, literature and art. To think of such a wonderfully progressive community in terms of the old untouchable is to write yourself down an ignoramus. Not that their troubles from caste Hindus are over: not, by any means. But they are wide awake. Neither a Hindu Mahasabha nor a National Congress can deceive them in the name of Anti-untouchability and all that empty talk. The fate of Hinduism is in their hands and not in ours – a small microscopic minority. They can carry on a fight for themselves in any good cause they undertake without any of our assistance.

And all this, you must remember, has been their achievement within the brief space of twenty five years And the Christian Missions, have not only not been getting a single convert during these twenty five years, but such of them who were Christians before have been taken back to their own community.

You will now understand, for one thing, that if Tiyyas want temple entry, it is not because they have no temples of their own but because they feel and feel rightly, that every Hindu public temple is just theirs as well. My esteemed friends Mr. S. Sachidanandam Pillai, B. A. L. T.,

Deputy, Inspector of Schools has said: "The best way to remove untouchability is to propagate Saivite religion. When the conduct of the Depressed classes assumes a better level, their entry into the temples will naturally take place without any obstruction. Till that day comes arrangements must now be made (by Saivites presumably?) for the construction of separate temples exclusively for the Depressed Classes and for their worship in those temples."

Comment is entirely out of the question: I can only be sorry. If only my esteemed friend knew that Vellala Saivite as he is, were he to visit the Hindu State of Cochin, he will not be allowed to enter a Hindu temple or bathe in a temple tank, while a Nair will be, he might have then known to a small degree, that he would be an untouchable in Hindu Cochin and what it would be like to be an untouchable. Ignorance in Mr. Pillai about the untouchables and the Depressed Classes is excusable; but not insult, intentional or unintentional.

If the Tiyyas assert a right to every public institution, religious or charitable, founded or maintained out of public funds it is just to assert their self-respect and to demonstrate to the whole world that they also have contributed to the same public fund like any other caste Hindu. I may assure you that they are merely putting the caste Hindu to the test. You profess to call them Hindus; you use them for your political advancement by using their numbers as against the Muslims; you have even chosen to administer your Mitakshara Law to them; you profess equality and fraternity and all that on public platforms. They are taking you at your word. They are just now testing your sincerity. They seem to suspect that the Anti-untouchability programme adumbrated by the Brahmin Congress is just eyewash; mere political window-dressing. You cannot go on deceiving them for ever.

Have you heard of the Pulayas and Cherumas of the West Coast, the lowest among the untouchables? You have not got their likes here; the lowest form of human beings, on God's earth. Their condition long ago was thus described by a western observer – "They are looked upon as below the level of the beasts which share this wild country with them. They are not even allowed to build huts to protect themselves from the inclemencies of the weather. A sort of lean-to supported by four bamboo poles and open at the sides, serves as a shelter for some of them and keeps off the rain, though it does not screen them from the wind. Most of them however, make for themselves what may be

called nests in the branches of the thickest foliage trees, where they perch like birds of prey for the greater part of the twenty four hours. They are not even allowed to walk peaceably along the high roads. If they see any one coming towards them, they are bound to utter a certain cry and to go a long way round to avoid passing him. A hundred paces in the very nearest they may approach any one of a different caste. The Puliahs live an absolute savage life and have no communication whatever with the rest of the world." Most of the description is true, even today, in some places on the West Coast.

And today, even though the caste Hindu prejudices are still as strong as ever and even though their economic condition cannot be said to be very much brighter today, still there is one achievement of theirs which is worth mentioning. Their able leader Mr. Ayyankali managed to win, at any rate, for the fairer members or his community the warm admiration and favour of the Nair youth of the land; and the result today (within the last 20 years) is a growing dynamic community possessed of handsome girls and virile and intelligent boys who are forging their way ahead through innumerable caste and religious obstacles and prejudices even now existent. This is what the educational authorities of the Government of Cochin had to say of these Pulaya boys and girls in 1929: "Many members of this class are found very eager to take advantage of the facilities offered to them by Government, nay some of them have even found means to start schools of their own. The average intelligence of the Pulayas is not in any respect inferior to that of the other castes. The teacher of these pupils report that all those pupils who attend the schools regularly are able to hold their own against pupils of any other class or caste. The Pulaya pupils have, as a rule, more taste for music than the average pupils of other classes. All this is inexplicable" concludes the Hindu Government of Cochin "considering that these people did not have any culture whatever at any time known to history." They had Buddhist and Jain culture.

This senseless ban, this meaningless ostracism, this unimaginable barbarism as against the so-called untouchables and Depressed Classes, has penetrated even statutory institutions like Municipalities on the West Coast. An incident within my own cognizance will reveal how far this pernicious prejudice is still prevalent in some places. One Municipal Councillor was responsible for getting a resolution passed in a certain Municipality after a heated debate, that no citizen or rate-payer of the Municipality shall be denied access to any institution,

road, well, tank etc. upon which a pie from the Municipal funds was being spent. The Government under a Brahmin Dewan vetoed it; and that resolution is now a dead letter. And there was such a furore against that Municipal Councillor from his caste Hindu Constituency.

With this sort of mentality still strong in us, we want to fight against racial discrimination in far-flung places like South Africa, Kenny, Canada etc. We get offended when we are treated as Asiatics and called "Natives." "Niggers" or "Blackies." We raise such a hullabaloo. Then, in the name of our National self-respect, we rage and howl and foam in the mouth. Why not begin it nearer home, my caste Hindu masters? Why not employ that self-respect in India itself and thus avoid becoming the laughing stock of the whole civilized world? The salvation of India lies that way – in maintaining our self-respect in India first and abroad next.

And now to conclude. As Mr. Manika Nayagar holds, Saivism or Saiva Sidhantam advertised today as your religion is not Tamilian; it is just pure Aryanism or Brahminism; it is known only to a very few and it is not and never was a popular religion. It will be unworthy of any Tamilian to profess it; we have got to cast it out and retain only whatever is of the genius of the Tamilian which present day Saivism is not. As regard the Saivite caste, as Kapilar truly put it, that again is the offspring of Brahminism, and in numbers, we are in a hopeless minority. We must read the signs of the times; we must keep pace with the march of events; or we may become as extinct as the dodo. We Saivites ought not to sit like Neroes singing Thevarams, while Tamilakam is burning. We must not bury our heads, like the ostrich, in the shifting sands of orthodoxy of superstition. We must be up and doing. The Self-respect Movement heralds the dawn of a new era. It furnishes a golden opportunity for the Saivite youth. It is the clarion call to their genius, their spirit of adventure; their spirit of love and sacrifice. Under its auspices they are bound to rise to the very height of their manhood. The three barriers to our progress based upon caste, religion and sex, must be removed – ruthlessly if necessary. Now is the time and never afterward.

(1) *The moving finger writes and having writ,*

Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor wit

Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

(2) *And that inverted Cowl we call the Sky*
Where under crawling Coop't we live and die
Lift not they hands to It for help; for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

- *Revolt*, 18, 25, August, 1,15, 22 September, 1929

6 VARNADHARMA

6.1 Understanding Varna and Caste

Slavish Mentality

(By B.G.)

There is no doubt that the Non-Brahmins as a rule are wanting in Self Respect. The very word "Swami" with which any Brahmin is being addressed without any consideration of the status or age of the Brahmin shows the mentality of the Non-Brahmins. A small incident in a Brahmin hotel may interest our readers as to how far Brahmins arrogate to themselves a higher status in society. As soon as I entered a Brahmin hotel, with which I am familiar, I addressed a Brahmin boy of about 12 years, as "adai". The boy resented and ran away to fetch what I wanted. Returning to my table the boy called a Malayalee servant of about 10 years using the word "Adai". At once I asked the Brahmin boy how he could call the Malayalee boy "adai". At once he replied that the Malayalee boy was his junior. Then I asked him what does it matter if I a senior called him "adai". He at once replied that the Brahmin should not be addressed with words like "adai". I replied using this word purposely that I do not care for his caste and if he talks a little more, a slap on his cheek will be the result. The boy kept quiet. This is a small incident and many of our readers would have come across similar incidents. What this small drama tells us is that Brahmins as a rule are being imbibed from their boyhood that they are the superior race, second to none but Gods in heaven.

Always the ruling race had a higher stake in society and perhaps Brahmins were respected when they invaded South India. They are now being ruled as every one of us by foreigners; still they cling to their false prestige and ask us to respect them and even ask us to help them to bring down the ruling race i.e. foreigners.

We cannot blame the Brahmin arrogance, but the Non-Brahmin mentality. The Brahmins are not troublesome as many of us think. But keep him at a distance he will be the most useful servant of society. What is now wanted is that the Non Brahmins should realize that there is no mediator between God and man, and between man and

man there is no grade by right of birth.

- *Revolt*, 15 May 1929

A Study of Caste

(Book Review)

This short book is written by Mr. P. Lakshmi Narasu, author of "The Essence of Buddhism". The author makes a critical study of the institution of caste and clearly shows how social reformers need not offer any constructive programme, and how their work in this sphere should necessary be destructive. Though short in size, this book contains 160 pages of most useful information about the influences of Brahminism and its baneful effects on society. The learned author has made a deep study of the Buddhistic tenets and has given elaborate accounts about the influence of other religions on Hinduism. His extensive knowledge of and deep penetration into other reformed religions obtaining at present stand him in good stead in the production of this excellent book. He advocates fearless revolt against the crippling disease of caste system and emphasises upon the immediate destruction of this social intolerance, which is eating the very vitals of our society. In his characteristically vigorous style, the author vehemently attacks Brahminism and condemns in unequivocal terms the ruinous results it has brought upon humanity. The writer has a forceful way of expression which not a little adds to his scholarly discussion. He has cited historical evidences for the origin of caste and the various forces that were set against it from time to time. Indeed, the author has done a great national service. In short, as far as the substance is concerned, the book leaves nothing to be desired. We only wish the book is divided into chapters in the next edition. The short size of the book specially makes it convenient to be carried with us at all times. It is an indispensable life-companion to all social reformers, and we specially recommend it to every English knowing member of the Self respect movement.

Price: Rs.1-8-0; Copies can be had of: Sri Siddhartha Book Depot, Champion Reef Post, Kolar Gold Field.

- *Revolt*, 22 May 1929

Good Portends Indeed!

We are glad that the necessity for reforming Hindu Law is being keenly felt even by those who were opposed to any form of change in the existing conditions. At a conference held at Poona for the purpose of reforming Hindu Law, an extract of whose proceedings, we publish elsewhere in this issue, the Chairman of the Reception Committee and the President have emphasized the rottenness of the present system of Hindu Law. Mr. Kelkar, in his Reception speech, remarks: "it would be a large order on nature to expose that the Hindu Law, hundreds or thousand of years old would be quite enough or suitable for all succeeding generations, present and future". We are gratified to note that now at least our people are beginning to feel the importance of reforming Hindu Law. We are particularly glad that many eminent lawyers, jurists and prominent men were present at the conference. The present Hindu Law, our readers are aware, is for the most part, based upon Smrithis like the code of Manu. The laws which were enacted for a society living many thousands of years ago, cannot hold good for a society living in the twentieth century. When reformers explain to the people the simple fact that the administration of an old law which is quite incompatible with modern conditions, is solely responsible for the evils in society, there is the cry of "religion in danger."

The priestly class in our country may not be said to be unaware of the difficulties that they themselves had to undergo, as a result of the old laws. For example we know in many cases the Brahmins who undertook sea-voyages, were excommunicated for having been polluted by the foreign atmosphere. There are also many examples where the Brahmins who contracted inter caste marriages were excommunicated. As days passed on, they began to realise that some of their own laws stood as obstacles on their way in leading the often much maligned materialistic life. Naturally, when their interest were affected, they boldly defied the laws. When anyone objected, they gave new interpretations to old laws to suit the present conditions. When others attacked the Brahmins as to immorality or unscrupulousness, they quoted the *Niyoga* system of marriage. When they were condemned for drinking, they quoted the *Soma* juice of the Vedic times, and when they were found fault with flesh eating, they cited the custom of meat eating in the *Yagas*. But still, we should know, they were Brahmins and Brahmins only! And still there was the "holy" thread.

But the face-born class raises its hue and cry when the Non Brahmins clamour for equal rights and privileges: It is really a pity that the Vedas and the Smrithis which permit the Brahmins to read the *mlecha* tongue, to build stately houses in the midst of towns, to lick at the feet of foreigners, to practice drinking and meat eating, to contract inter-caste marriages, in short to adapt anything under the Western Civilization, do not allow the taking into our fold of the downtrodden millions who are miserably segregated as "untouchables, unseeables and unapproachables." It is a pity that these Vedas and Smrithis do not allow the harmonious mixture of all the innumerable castes that are responsible for ignominious distinctions between man and man. It is again a pity that the Vedas and Smrithis do not permit the stopping of the enormous drain of money in the name of god and religion. It is evident, under these conditions, wherein the secret lies. "The Devil quotes the Scripture" for the Devil's purpose. If any reform or alteration in the law should be made for the betterment of the 97 percent and to the detriment of the 3 percent, there is the inevitable cry of "religion in danger."

We should feel proud on the one hand, of the fact that such savants as Mr. Kelkar, have come down from their pedestal of rigid orthodoxy, and set a bold example, by expressing boldly the existing iniquities in the Hindu Law. There is on the other hand, our Varnashramites in the South, who follow the leave-not-a-rack behind policy of the Brahmin Dharma, of whose shortsighted notions of the world, we shall write later on.

The President of the Hindu Law Reform Conference, the Hon. Mr. Madgaumkar very prudently observes: "We are realizing that unless we reform ourselves, our institutions, and to some extent our laws, we shall degenerate still further and shall perish." Will the Non-Brahmins at least who blindly add to the chorus of "religion in danger," begin to take the note of warning sounded by the President? Or will they persist in dancing to the tunes of the wire-pullers, and bring ruin upon themselves?

Now, apart from the sincere attempts of the Law-makers to reform the Hindu Law – for which we are very much grateful to them, – we feel it our duty to express our opinions on the matter. Generally speaking, man follows a religious path, not on account of the teachings of the religious books. We don't deny there may be a very small percentage of people in the world, who lead a righteous life, on account of the

dictates of religion. But it is undeniable that a large majority of people lead a moral life simply because they are forced to be so, by a law above them. Similarly in India, there is the Hindu Law which forces the people under its jurisdiction to obey the rules laid by it. If a man does not rob his brother, it is not because *The Kural* says so, but because he is afraid of the policeman. If a man is afraid of committing rape, it is not that *The Naladiyar* refrains him from the act (*Thirukural and Naladiyar are ancient prescriptive ethical Tamil Jain texts – editors*), but he is terribly afraid of the law above him. Hence, when once the General Law is made up-to-date, there need be no necessity to rewrite the Shastras and Puranas. If there is a potent Law which can direct the people on the right path, and a Government which can effectively carry out those laws, there is the assurance of the prosperity of the people. Then the biggest brains of the country can be usefully utilised for better purposes of serving humanity than correcting or reforming the old fashioned puranas and Shastras. We see the morals of society that were once administered in the sugar-coat of religion, are today working untold havoc. The reformers of Hindu Law are also seeing the same. Those who are really desirous of establishing a better society, let them not waste their precious energy in amending or correcting the old Shastras. Let them not do the futile work of making research in the law, when it is too late for our country to be indulging in researches.

Lastly, a word to the Varnashramites: Ye, Cream of Brahminism, do you not feel a sense of shame to hold Varnashrama Conferences under these circumstances?

– *Revolt*, 5 June 1929

6.2 Opposing Varna

Varnashrma Dharma Vivisected

(P. Krishna Iyer, B.A,)

This South India seems to be a fertile place for every species of madness and quackery. And of all the fads and mischievous insanities that abound here, Varnashrma Dharma is the insanest and most mischievous, since it is the oldest fad practiced. It will die hard; It may not die without a kick. "A theory lives long after its brains have been knocked of it" said Leslie Stephen. Varanshrma Dharma theory continues without its brains crushing and mangling its victims like a juggernaut.

Every sane man knows that this Varnashrama Dharma is midsummer madness; but there is a method in this madness as, in 'Hamlet'. The theory does not lack logic and reason; only they wish consistently and systematically in an insane plane. It is reason run mad, as it does very often in maniacs. Varnashrama Dharma theory is evolved by a primitive and barbarous method of thinking. And it is supported by madmen logic and reason. Thus it is a hybrid between stark madness and primitives savagery.

The way to destroy a weed is to pull it by the roots. The roots of this Varnashrama theory lead to a fundamentally wrong method of thinking which is unscientific and primitive. So I will strike at the roots.

Modern science works from facts to theories, and so do all constructive thinkers worth the name. The Varnashramists work from theories to facts. The practical architect builds up from foundation; these insane theorists start from roof downwards. The test of a good house is that it must stand knocks; the test of a good theory is that it must fit the facts. The early Christians threw up Adam and Eve theory to explain the origin of man; Darwin set up the monkey against Adam. The Adamites worked down from theory to facts; Darwin set out to find the facts and stumbled on a theory. Whose theory survives?

The Varnashrmists start with a pet Utopia of their own full of tufted and pot-bellied bipeds and argue backwards to practical rules of conduct and ordering of society. When they find that the facts don't fit their theory they thrust the facts to fit their fad. Thus they created the untouchable, caste, child marriage etc, to fit into their theory.

It is as if a tailor should come to you and say "Sir, l have an ideal garment much as angels wear; it may not fit you, but I will just chop off portions of your anatomy and fit you into my ideal garment."

If the tailor fits the facts to the theory he is a criminal and goes to jail. The Varnashramists who have done the same on a much larger scale call themselves thinkers and idealists and are free as the air. The one who mutilates one mans is called a madman; the others who mutilate a whole society still call themselves sane thinkers. The first duty of a sane South Indian is to segregate these madmen in a new Bedlam.

The Chinese women cramped her legs and called it beauty; the Brahmin lady committed Suttee and was called dutiful; the Japanese committed hara-kiri and was called loyal. See these fitted facts to an insane theory. All these were martyrs at the altar of insane idealism. Then appeared the rebel against insane idealism who showed that beauty may be in normal legs, that a woman may be useful without committing Suttee, and a man loyal without killing himself.

Here comes the Varnadharmist and says, "my theory is perfect; so fit the facts to it; keep caste, untouchablity, etc., and work up to my ideal". "But caste is inhuman says" the realist who sees the facts. "It is organismalness" (sic) says the idealist who can concoct phrases but cannot see the facts.

"Untouchablity is atrocious" says the realist". "No, it is inter-organic distinctiveness" says the Idealist. And so they go on the realist seeing the naked facts, and the insane idealist, explaining away every festering sore of society with lovely mouthfuls of phrases, dictionary in hand. It is the way with all madmen; they are not concerned with actual facts. They are more concerned with sophistries and cobweb of their own sick-brains. What is the cure for this species of madmen? A cerebral operation? Or an ophthalmic mice operation to make them see actual facts? So far as I can see, the only practical and effective cure is in our idealistic tailor who fits his client into his garment. Reader if you happen to be a tailor, do unto the Varnashramist as he does unto society; i.e. Fit him into your ready made garments with a Jack knife – you are our only hope.

- *Revolt*, 15 September 1929

The Curse of Caste: A Dialogue

(between a Varnashramite and a Self-Respector)

(By P.C.P.)

Varnashramite: I am glad that I met you. I wanted so much to have a talk with you. I heard that you have become a Self-respector and that you have begun to laugh at us, at our tuft of hair, at our caste-marks, at our holy threads, at our Sacred Books, at our temples and Gods, at our marital sacraments, at our widowhood. In fact, it seems you are now laughing at everything we have hitherto held ancient and sacred. Why are you making such fool of yourselves? May I know why?

Self-Respector: Why is the whole civilized world laughing at you and your caste? May I know why?

Varna: Oh! You mean by civilized world, Europeans and Americans, including Miss Mayo? Where were they and their civilization during the time of our Rama Rajyam? They were just prowling in the woods. Their civilization! A matter of yesterday! If they laugh at our Varnashrama, the most glorious thing in our civilization, it is just because it is Kali Yuga and nothing else.

***S-R*:** But the Egyptians and Chinese and ever so many others seems to have had much hoarier civilizations than you can claim for yours. And yet nobody seems to laugh at them. Is it because they had no Varnashram or Caste among them?

Varna: Don't harp upon it. You don't know the secret of it. Everywhere in the world there is caste-system. Go to England, you will find caste there also. You may go to America or any other country which you consider civilized; there is no country which has not the caste-system or Varnashramam. They will call it class, instead of caste; that is about all. Who are the Lords in England? They are all high-caste Brahmins of that place. They don't even sit with commoners. That will be pollution. They have a separate Legislative Chamber of their own, called the House of Lords. You must read Piche Lal Shastra. The Lords are the Brahmins of England. Do you think, in England, you can laugh at a high-caste Englishman – a live lord, for instance? You will be sent to jail at once; they are very strict there. But in India, it is Kali Yuga now and it is not Rama Rajyam; therefore you laugh at our order and our ways.

S-R: My dear Sir! If what you say is true, then that means, that in England and other civilized nations, any body can rise up to the highest caste, even though not one by birth. For instance, plain Mr. H.H. Asquith, the late Prime Minister, a Sudra Englishman by birth, if you please, became the Earl of Oxford – a very high Brahmin of Benares. And heaps and heaps of them. Why Jews, Christian Panchamas according to your notions of Varnashrama, like Benjamin Disraeli and Rufus Isaacs, became Lords and Brahmins. Agnostic John Morley even, became a Brahmin. An Indian has become an English Brahmin – a Lord! Don't you think there is some stupid confusion in you as regards caste and class? You trace caste entirely by birth alone; while class may not have anything to do with birth, except it be accident and may be due to other things.

Varna: What is your authority for it? Is there anything in the Puranas and Ithikasas in support of what you say?

S-R: Yes, even Puranas and Ithikasas will support me, if it is worth while to go in for those silly things. But I have got a more modern and up-to-date authority. Have you heard of Mr. Hughes, Ex-Prime Ministers of Australia? Please listen to what he has said about your caste:

"Caste must not be confused with class – caste and class are essentially and entirely different. Western people do not understand caste – they have never known it. Slavery and serfdom they understood in the past, but long ago suppressed. Class they have always known and at times tolerated but more often denounced. In modern times class distinctions are much less rigid and with the march of democracy, society tends to become more fluid. In the Dominions, for example, there are no barriers between the child of the poorest labourer and that of the man of the highest position in the country. If he has the necessary qualities of mind and body, he may become the Chief Priest, the Chief Magistrate, the Political head of the Country – wealth, honours and position are within his grasp. There are no worlds he cannot aspire to conquer. And in England, although class distinctions are clearer cut than in Dominions, a son of the people can become a belted earl if his ambitions urge him to enter the narrow circle of the hereditary nobility. Class at is worst is a barrier which the individual may surmount, *but caste is a prison from which he cannot hope to escape while life lasts.* The child of a man born in a caste, the members of which are condemned to act

as the scavengers of the community can look forward to nothing better – a scavenger he was born and a scavenger he must live all the days of his life."

Varna: You say the man who wrote this is an Australian. I don't wonder. Do you know who the Australians are and who their ancestors were? Convicts! Have they any ancient Puranas, any Gita and Vedas to fall back upon? Are you Self-respectors going to sit at the feet of such people and learn their wisdom? And ignore your Sages and Rishis and their Smritis? Oh! What has India come to!

S-R: My Dear Sir! For thousands of years you kept to yourself all the wisdom then going. You said and acted as though it would be a sin to give it out to the people at large; like casting pearls before swine. But for the Westerner, we would never have got to know what you have hitherto held secret and sacred and which we find to be mere dross. And you cannot fairly accuse us of acquiring wisdom at the feet of other people, for when we were at your feet you used them to kick us with. There is really no just cause for complaint from you. On the other hand, we were merely handling for ourselves the well-known Law of Karma and to some purpose. There is absolutely no analogy between your idiotic caste-system and the fast disappearing class distinctions of the Western countries. They are as poles asunder in conception and in practice. The essence of your noble wisdom always has been "once caste always caste".

Varna: When all is said and done, why bother about the caste-system? What harm has it done to the country? Are we not all sons and daughters of the same Mother India? Why waste powder and shot over the destruction of such a small thing as caste? Have we not better work, nobler work, to do?

S-R: I have no patience with you! Look at the outcastes, the depressed classes, the untouchables, and the 3000 (three thousand) sub-castes among the so called caste Hindus themselves! Are you not ashamed of it? Sons and daughters of Mother India! Forsooth! Where are the Fathers? And who were they? Mother India must have played the harlot, till now, to have produced such a diversity of castes and sub-castes and out-castes among her own children. India has not got and will not have any status anywhere in the world unless all her sons and daughters have an equal status in their own house and in the eyes of their own Mother.

Varna: Don't get excited. Colour distinctions exist everywhere. Take America – there is the Negro problem. Take South Africa – there is the Asiatic question. What is colour bar but Varnam? Why should we run against Fate? As Aryans, our colour or Varnam is vastly different from that of other castes in India. You must admit our colour superiority. Do you think that our colour is of the miserable Sudras and outcastes? Don't you think it is our sacred duty to keep up our colour or Varnam?

S-R: Then why do you sit up and howl at the top of your voices when these same Sudras and outcastes are treated in South Africa and other places in exactly the same way – perhaps better way – than you treat them here? Why do you preach nationalism, then, with the tongue in your cheek? Why do you hunt with hounds and ran with the hare? Is it not sheer hypocrisy?

Varn: Be calm, my young friend, be calm! It is not hypocrisy; it is what is known as scientific politics. I quite agree that as a matter of fact, no Varnashramite, including our venerable brother, Gandhiji, is permitted by the Shastras to say anything about the question of colour bar anywhere let alone South Africa and other places. I quite admit that; but there is our politics to be considered. If we Varnashramites, the most intelligent people in India, sit quiet over that affair, over the insults offered to our brothers and sisters in other places, do you think we would be getting any reforms in India? Who, in India, fought the Great War? Not we, the intelligentia, our hands are unsullied, guiltless of any blood. But while you are merely fighting, we were using our brains and got the greatest installment of reforms for India and a Declaration of Policy at that opportune moment, over which bones are being broken even now. Now the best thing you can do is to leave the game to us, as you have been doing it hitherto.

S-R: And what has been the net result of all? What is the good of all these reforms? It has hitherto resulted in Indianisation of services which is synonymous with Brahminisation. You fought through the Congress for equality of office hitherto held by the Englishmen to be given to you, on some pretext or other and further wanted that pay also which was given to them. The Englishman had conquered India; he had spent men and money in acquiring it; he is to have conveniences and comforts living in a different climate and surrounding; the cost of his living ,as also the standard of it is something different from that of yours or mine; and yet, you want the same pay, the same comforts or the same

conveniences, even though the country can ill-afford to pay it and you know that also; nor are you prepared to serve the country accepting that which the country is in a position to give you. You say that your brain is as good as that of the Englishman and why not he pay in the same way.

You remind one of our Tenali Rama, the Court Jester. When the king told him in jest that the sugar spread before him was sand, the Court Jester took him at his word and ate up the sugar all the time lamenting that it was sand. Your worshipful leader the Right Honourable V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, who fought for it, stated on the floor of the old Imperial Legislative Council, that the Country always preferred the brown bureaucrat to the white one and got it.

You won't take a pie less than that paid to the Englishmen; it would wound Indian susceptibilities and national self-respect, if less were accepted. You grumble at the inequality of it; you appear before the Simon Commission and put up a grumble or two; you might even do it at the Round Table Conference; you write to your national press; you start official Unions and cry in unison like widows; in your nationalistic fervour you fail to remember who has got to pay you.

The badge of your tribe when we suffered you was poverty; your today's life-breath is unbounded wealth, undreamt of power and position and prestige. That goes against the grain; and that is the economic rub.

Varna: There you are, after all. The cat is now out of the bag. What did that volcano of a Sirdar Patel tell you? You, Self-Respectors are after all office hunters; selling your soul for the loaves and fishes of office. That is your game. We knew it the moment the Self-respect Movement came into existence. Under the guise of social and religious activities you are merely trying to strengthen the hands of the Justice Party men – your Mudaliyars and Pillays and Naidoos and Rajus etc. – for more and more office…And…

S-R: Go slow, please. We are not above confessing that we want official power and prestige, as much as any Brahmin does. We do not profess to indulge (as some pious friends among you do) in calling upon our Non-Brahmin brethren not to seek for offices any more – because you seem to turn up your nose at it. On the other hand, we want to wrest every office from the monopolist in order to share it with our brethren of the so called depressed classes, and untouchables and of

whichever community it might be among the Non-Brahmins which has not had its innings till now. The Self-Respector, to talk high-brow, has given a new orientation to the theory and practice of the formula of communal representation. In plain vernacular, the Self-Respect Movement expects every one of the 3000 sub-castes among the so called Caste Hindus – including your so called Mudaliyars and Pillays and Naidoos and Rajus but barring the Brahmin – to give first place to the hitherto submerged classes. To them shall belong, if the Self-Respector can help it, all the official power and prestige in India. That is the creed of the Self-Respector. Hereafter, we are not going to fight amongst ourselves as to who amongst us is to get it. That is why we keep you out. And we know, once the Brahmin-Varnashramite is deprived of his monopoly, there is enough and more to go round – for one and all among the Non-Brahmins. And if it is going to be "inefficient", it is not your funeral. Thank you, we shall manage ours.

Varna: Offices! Power! Prestige! Under British rule! Whoever thinks of it? That shows that all of you are political reactionaries; India's greatest curse. Now, honestly, do you know who fought for Dominion Status for India, which is as good as achieved? Have you seen our nationalist journals? Do you know who is for Independence of India – complete severance from England? Do you know who does the trick? We Varnashramites; we intelligentia; we high castes; the cream of Hindu society and not your half-fed ignorant masses. Bah! And what have you Self-Respect reactionaries been doing all this time? Preaching there is no God; there is no temple; there is no religion; there is no caste. And look at us. *Complete Independence for India!* And that is where we are today.

S-R: As regards your Independence stunt, my dear friend, it is mere wash-out. It cuts no ice. You are at the end of your tether and you know it. Your fright at the Sarda Act has exposed your political pretensions. Hereafter, you cannot deceive anybody at any rate, in South India. From your own cry it is clear, you want the protection of the Englishmen's religious neutrality to live in amity and peace with your Indian brethren. You have proclaimed from the house tops that for living in decent Indian society you want the protective arm of the Englishman. In South India, your Congress is dead as the door nail. You brought it about with your social and religious obscurantism. Who is going to take you seriously when you prate about Independence and all that tall talk? Tell that to the marines! Those days are over and

done with. If you had any patriotism or nationalism left in you, you would have taken your medicine like a man and not howled over the Sarda Act. That Act was the acid test of your patriotism and your capacity to live harmoniously in any well-organized society ; and you have failed to come up to the scratch.

Varna: If it comes to it, that you Self-Respectors will not allow us to go our ways in peace in Dravida land, then we shall go back to our mother-land – Aryavartha. Sirdar Patel has promised us a warm welcome there. And even so many others. Do you know who the losers will be then? Not we. We brought our Aryan civilization from the north and humanised your ancestors, who were after all Rakshasas, Asuras and monkeys. Don't you forget that. You are going to feel the loss only when we disappear from this land of yours. Not now. You will repent when it is too late. Now, what our Bagavan says…

S-R: Stop that rot! We care a tuppence for all your Bagavans put together! Now, attend to this.

You are no more Aryan than any Dravidian in South India is. History, ethnology and all the modern sciences are dead against those pretensions of yours. One eminent Brahmin Judge of the Madras High Court was candid enough to confess it in one of his reported Judgements: "Brahmana Hindus are not so predominantly Aryan in blood, as usually assumed". Aryavarta is no more your native land than Australia. Give up all those ideas. You may take it from me nobody is going to welcome you in Aryavarta once they come to know you as well as we do. As it is they have got enough troubles there.

And besides, you can't take your ladies to Aryavarta for historians say they are decidedly Dravidians coming of the old stock of Rakshasas, Asuras and Monkeys, even if are prepared to humour you as being Aryan. You can't leave them behind. That will be a handicap for both of us. All things considered both of us have got to rough it out here. The only thing is, caste or Varnam, both yours and mine, is in the melting pot. What is going to happen to it will not be found in our Puranas. So let us part in peace, as we have got to live together in peace.

Varna: As a Non-Brahmin, your temper is short. But all the same, in spite of my caste sentiments and all that, which I cannot easily give up, I am a keen democrat in politics. I have always stood for political equality

and independence. A bare look at our nationalist newspaper will convince you of that…

S-R: There you are at it again. Don't be down-hearted. No Brahmin will give up his caste; not that he has any, but even the pretending to be high caste will not be easily given up. If only you knew what Mr. Hughes has said about your caste, nobody will expect you to give it up – without a fight.

"The Brahmins devised the caste-system of India" says Mr.Hughes, Ex-Prime Minister of Australia, "to safeguard their privileges, to which, among the two-hundred and fifty millions of untouchables are the base of the caste pyramid, ten millions of Brahmins as its apex. These ten millions are the hereditary priesthood of India and by the caste system they found the vast population in chains of ignorance, superstition and poverty" – Can the Brahmin give up his caste? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spot?

The Caste Hindu will meet democracy only in his cremation ground and not earlier. This is the curse of caste. *Au revoir.*

- *Revolt*, 17 November 1929

Part III

The Women's Question

The Self-respect movement's manner of resolving the women's question in early twentieth century India was both unique and radical. Taking its cues from a variety of influences, including particular campaigns to do with birth control, law reform and reform of marriage practices, the movement advanced a critique of existing gender arrangements that threatened to turn them on their head. The history of the movement's engagement with gender concerns is yet to be fully mapped. The pages of *Revolt* are important in this respect, for they chronicle the making of this radicalism, even as it was being articulated.

The years 1928-29 were particularly significant for the politics of gender and feminism that eventually came to prevail in the movement for the next decade and more. For, these years witnessed the constellation of several events. Dr Muthulakshmi tabled the Devadasi Abolition Bill in the Madras Legislative Council in November 1927, and as it was discussed and circulated, gave rise to a vigorous debate on sexual morality, male promiscuity, and conjugal norms in caste society. 1927 also saw the publication of that hugely contentious book, *Mother India* by Katherine Mayo, which, among other things, hastened the pace of reform in the nationalist camp. (Mayo identified unhealthy sexual and conjugal practices, including child marriage, unhygienic birthing practices and imposed purdah and confinement of women to the zenana as the chief causes of India's moral and political enervation.) Eager to disprove the charges Mayo's vituperative pen had laid at their door, nationalist ideologues and leaders sought to re-think their position on at least some of the social customs and practices that had attracted Mayo's rather prurient imagination.

During this time, in fact, from 1925 onwards, marriage reform was widely discussed. In 1924, H. C. Gour had drafted a bill to amend Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, which sought to raise the age of consent in marital and extra-marital relationships. Colonial government was reluctant to act on the bill, but a year later, it proposed its own bill, fixing 14 as the age of consent in extra marital cases and 13 in marital cases. It became clear though that very few instances of the infringement

of the law in the context of marriage came to the courts. Gour then turned his attention to the existing marriage law and suggested, through his Children's Protection Bill, that parents ought not to marry their children off before they attained a certain age. Even as this bill was on the anvil, Har Bilas Sarda, an Arya Samaj reformer who had consistently addressed infirmities faced by women, advanced his own bill, which eventually came to be referred to as the Child Marriage Restraint Bill.

Meanwhile, an Age of Consent Committee had been set up to hear various views on the subject and several women deposed before it. In the course of their depositions, they indicated that they favoured a raising of the age of marriage as well. The All-India Women's Conference, the nationalist forum for political and social concerns, pertaining to women backed this demand, as did several nationalist men.

This was also a time when birth control arguments were in vogue, and they proved wide-ranging. Some invoked typically Malthusian specters of an overpopulated world, teeming with the wretched and ignorant poor; while others, following Gandhi, spoke of the importance of sexual restraint.

Revolt responded to this conjuncture with its characteristic energy and indignation. Its writers utilized the discursive context which shaped these various debates, on Devadasi abolition, child marriage and appropriate conjugality and birth control to advance a complex argument on equality and justice for women (Several women contributed to this debate.)

In an immediate sense, *Revolt*'s position did not appear distinctive, since the reform party happened to be in the majority in this case, and only an orthodox fringe, composed entirely of Madras Brahmins, opposed Sarda's marriage bill (Sarda himself took note of this fact, and utilized it to argue that reformist Brahmins from Madras were in the majority and their orthodox counterparts were vastly outnumbered). Neither were Self-respecters the only ones to speak of the importance of birth-control. Eugenics proved an immensely attractive theme, and several nationalists were – uncritically – impressed by the possibilities of social engineering that it held out.

But for the Self-respect movement, the debates around sexuality and marriage meant more, as is evident from the manner in which they

inflected their arguments. The extracts from *Revolt* that feature in this section demonstrate this difference – which was extremely critical and helped to radicalize the movement in particular ways.

Section One features a set of general essays on the women's question, comprising a range of views which argue for a reform of women's status – together they establish a broad consensus as to the desirability of change. There is not much here to distinguish the nationalist reformer from the Self-respecter, as is evident from the views of Rukmini Lakshmipathy (a nationalist) and Kunjitham, who in the following years would emerge as one of the most radical voices of Self-respect feminism.

Section Two comprises a collection of writings on marriage, widowhood and birth-control all of which call into question its viability, in its present form, as a social institution. Here the Self-respect point of view and one that would be developed towards more radical ends in the 1930s is already evident – in 'Kirk's imagined dialogue on marriage, where a wife rejects marriage and the security it offers, not because she suffers great hurt, but because she sees the relationship as inherently limiting ('Kirk', as we have noted in the general introduction, comprises Tamil syllables, which denote 'one who is mad.') Miss Gnanam argues her case for inter-caste and inter-religious marriage, subject to women's choices. Divorce as not merely a legal option, but also social choice is a theme that figures at large in this section. Of the writings on widowhood, the most interesting is a sentimental short story on a widow's right to desire, and here we have a coming together of a Brahmin widow and a non-brahmin reformist young man.

The somewhat problematic essays in this section have to do with birth-control, at least one of which smacks of eugenicist rhetoric. Elsewhere, in the Tamil Self-respect journals, we find a different edge to the birth-control debate, central to which were the interlinked themes of women's choices and the restrictions imposed on women's lives by compulsory motherhood. Here, the Self-respect response to birth-control is marked by its rationalist approach, rather than its feminist politics.

Section Three comprises two short features on the law, being reports of Hindu Law reform conferences, held under the aegis of the Hindu Mahasabha. However critical Self-respecters were of religion, they did not hesitate to take in reformist views advanced even by groups whose politics they did not approve of – in this case, the views of the liberal

Mahasabha leader, M. P. Jayakar.

The fourth section is the most exciting of all, featuring as it does editorial and other views on the Child Marriage Restraint and Age of Consent bills. Here we find characteristic Self-respect themes: the importance of law in advancing social change; the counterposing of the rationality of legislation to the imbecilities of faith; the fury against Brahmin orthodoxy, and a startlingly brilliant indictment of its slippery and spurious logic on the subject of reform. In fact, it might be said that it was this unrepentant yet canny orthodoxy in the social sphere, so evident in its misogyny and selective use of tradition, which mediated the Self-respecters view of nationalist Congressmen in Madras (see Part 1). For it is this they criticize endlessly, especially in its political guise, which they see for what it is – a modernist garb that conceals a limited and oppressive social imagination.

The arguments in this section also gesture towards a secularism that challenges the re-invention of the past. Such acts of re-making defined the colonial Indian intellectual class's encounter with the world of science, democracy and progress. Self-respecters though did not take this path – they were less concerned about the corrosive effects of the modern world, and were inclined to understand modernity in dialectical terms, as offering possibilities which would work against the grain of oppressive custom and authority. They aligned themselves with the 'other' England of rationalists, sexual reformers and freethinkers and did not fear colonial criticisms of their lives and history (they were not incensed by Mayo's book, and challenged nationalists to prove her wrong.)

Since tradition did not appear a source of anxiety, neither did religion – they had nothing to lose, argued the Self-respecters, by turning their back on either. Importantly, they proposed an ethic of social affection and respect, and so they did not retreat into an arid and cynical rationalism.

The penultimate section comprises news on women's education and conferences. The last section comprises articles that answer those who criticized reforms, be it Gandhi, other Congressmen or leaders of the Justice party.

These pages from *Revolt* demonstrate the making of radical thought in the Tamil country, in the context of debates about women's status. The Self-respecters' views on the links between caste and women's

subordination, nationalism and Brahminism, and their impatience with strategic Non-brahminism were shaped by the events of 1928-29 – as they found themselves arguing for marital choice, inter-caste and inter-faith marriages, a politics that was leavened by progressive reform and a social life freed from the imperatives of faith and custom.

1 ARGUING FOR EQUALITY

Double Moral Standard

(By Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddy, M.L.C.)

"Of all the laws, rules and regulations which down the centuries have helped to place women in a position of inferiority none has been so very powerful in creating in the minds of men and people a sentiment of scorn and contempt for women as the degrading idea of the double standard of morals."

It is from this there has sprung that worst attack on women's dignity, that safety-valve theory that a certain number of women should exist, should sacrifice their self-respect, their honour, their comforts, their health and happiness to satisfy the lust of the other sex. At the present day the continuance of such a doctrine and of the laws which are founded on it, is a shameful anachronism unworthy of our civilization.

Both in the past and in the present, women have disproved their inferiority and how then can we at the present day tolerate or connive at a system which transforms a woman of whichever caste or class she may be, into a mere chattel, a piece of tainted merchandise.

So long as the double standard of morals continues to exist not only in law but in the spirit of moral code also will the emancipation of women have failed to achieve its full object? So, I may impress upon my country people that prostitution can never be lessened and much less eradicated by one-sided laws and one wrong act cannot be put down by another wrong measure. True it may be that we can never put down evil, but surely by our own well-directed efforts, just and equal laws and proper legislation we can minimize it to a very large extent as in the case of theft, murder and other immoral habits.

Scientific research and experience has proved beyond any doubt that continence is conducive to the physical and mental well being of an individual and all extra-marital relationship produce very serious consequences such as disease and disruption of family life and is opposed to the higher nature of man. As such, we have to look upon sexual promiscuity as an anti-social act, a sin and a crime, nay our poets and philosophers have viewed it in that light only. At the present day expert physiologists and psychologists have arrived at the following

conclusion:

Firstly, in the interest of the race and the individuals, it is essential that the stability of the family in marriage should be preserved and social habits and customs should be adjusted to that end. Secondly, there is overwhelming evidence that irregular sex-relationship whether in men or women leads to physical, mental and social harm.

In the face of these experiences of expert authorities and conclusions based upon such experiences, how could we sanction the existence of any caste or class, however ancient it may be, to make a profession of prostitution? Is it not the duty of parents and teachers to teach the boys as well as the girls the virtue of chastity and the benefits of continence to the individual and the race?

Is not character-training as important and as essential as training of intelligence? For want of such training, I have known young and bright lads inviting themselves to be tainted with the most formidable diseases and then taking the diseases to their innocent wives and children in the family. Therefore parent and teacher should more and more be made to realize that we stand more for the claims of posterity and it is the sacred duty of every parent to see that their offsprings do not sustain any permanent damage both physically and mentally by the absence of self-control during their adolescence.

Coming to the Devadasi system or dedication of girls to temples as it has become an institution of *vice* and is defended as such in certain quarters of the safety-valve theory, I like to say a few words. The inequity of that system is too deep for me to give expression and further under that inhuman and unjust system the innocent children of a certain caste or community are trained to become proficient in all the arts of solicitation that they become captives to vice.

At an age when they cannot very well see the future before them they are actually shown the way by their superstitious and orthodox elders in the name of our religion and in the name of the holy, both by word and deed to take to an unclean and unhealthy life – in short to a life of shame, children, who would, if no such training is given, grow to be loyal wives, affectionate mothers and useful citizens. Those children after being turned into sinners and criminals are then stigmatized and treated as out-castes. A few amongst us may justify its actions by saying "what does it matter, it is confined only to one caste or community; moreover we cannot by any means eradicate vice." I can only remind

them of these lines from the immortal poet:

Whatever wrong is done

To the humblest and weakest

Neath the all-holding sun

That wrong is also done to us.

Therefore this enormous crime of allowing the girl children of a certain community to be trained to a life of vice should be put an end to. In the name of the deeply wounded rights of the community, I appeal to all good men and women, and all just and right-minded people to effectively protect the rights of those innocent and helpless children at any cost. Also I desire to point out that till that grave injustice is done away with, we can never boast of any culture or civilization; while the Government calling itself enlightened and seeking shelter under 'non interference policy' and 'religious neutrality', will never be excused of its share in this most heinous crime, even after the inequity of the practice has been exposed in all its true colours.

The Great Pasteur has said: "When I see a child it inspires me with two feelings; tenderness for what he is now, respect for what he may become hereafter."

- *Revolt,* 17 November 1929

The Position of Indian Women

(By Miss T. S. Kunjitham)

Today the women in India have come to a realization of the bondage in which they have hitherto lain and as a consequence are striving for their emancipation. Centuries of ignorance and passive obedience born of inertia, to the galling yoke of custom have contributed to the lame endurance of this thralldom. But as a result of the newly risen democratic wave with all its enlightening influences which have penetrated even into India, they have come to realise the degraded position in which they have so long lain dormant. With the realization has come the burning desire to be free from the humiliating conditions.

In India religion and religious practices hallow and sanctify all the customs no matter however so barbarous, and all the conventions howsoever revolting, and all actions howsoever questionable and shadowy. And this all-compelling plea smothers up every cry for

reforms. As a result of the great war, women in the cilvilised countries of the West have come to realize themselves and have won their emancipation. They who did such heroic service to the nation during the recent great crisis and proved themselves indispensable at such a time had a claim to make their voices heard during times of peace as well. But India is still mediaeval in her outlook as far as the position of her womanhood is concerned and is far lagging behind as she invariably does in all her movement of progress.

Indian women of today are in a deplorable state. To express it in strong language, 'our women are slaves'. The Western women have liberty though not properly used; whereas we have none. But when freedom misused is moral poison, when denied is death. Is not the poison preferable, being one step removed from death and not necessarily leading to it? Many of our women are shut up indoors because of the pardha system, and as a result of this and other accursed and hoary system of caste, women have for the most part remained disunited and illiterate, immersed in ignorance and superstition, which in their turn lead to other evils of poverty, disease, dirt and drink. The degrading conditions of the masses of peasantry who are the child-bearers as well as the bread-winners are simply lamentable.

According to the social customs in India, girls are brought up to regard marriage as their one goal in life from which there seems to be no escape. They are married very young and they prove nothing more than the willing and cheerful sham of the family who should properly be respected house-makers. They are morally and spiritually in subjection. "Kitchen is their kingdom" and they are quite contended with their lot *i.e.* being the executor of their lords' commands. But women's capacity for self denial should outgrow barriers of family, creed, community and reach unto the furthest limits of the nation and humanity.

Indian women have been kept in subjection mainly because of the sanctifying customs. Mahatma Gandhi in his letter to Indian Women says, "As with men, so with women, their salvation is in their own hands. They must resist with all their power the evil customs that keep them under its heels". Only when the women of this country shake off these customs can the motherland hope to progress.

The evils of early marriage, the necessity for widow remarriage, the cutting off marriage expenses, bride and bridegroom price and the

necessity for monogamy and equal marriage laws for men as well as women, the evils of concubinage and prostitution are not yet fully realized by our women. It is a common consolation among Indians that this system of early marriage and arranged marriage conduce more towards domestic happiness than the method in the West of allowing the mates to choose their own mates for themselves, when they come to an age of discretion. But I say, is there any other country in the world where a woman is so humiliated? "A cooly woman who carries a basket on her head earns from six to eight annas a day; a Hindu lady who carries souls for nine months each time for the service of the State gets only what the husband's caprice allows and when he dies, the widow's humiliation is her pension". This is the fruit of the mighty Shastras. There is perhaps no Brahmin house in India without a widow and there is no widow but cherishes a sorrow in her heart. Very often the cry of the mother of the widowed child is, "I hate to think of my child as a shaven widow but the priests are priests; they are the representatives of God". Their desire is for their children to be free but custom which is nothing but sham – a cloak to our religion claiming undue respect and importance – blinds their eyes. Why should our children suffer for the sake of other people? Why cannot the widow remarry when every human being has a right to enjoy in this world? Custom is a mill-stone round India's womanhood, cast it off and be free."

India at present is awakening to a sense of all these evils and that is seen by the efforts of social reformers. A decisive step was recently taken with the passing of the Sarda Bill, which is sure to prove a beneficial and useful measure, which will help India in advancing the social and economic well-being of all the communities. This is a clear dawn of social liberty, whose parallel is to be found only with the other great reform carried out a century ago, when the suttee system was abolished. Let us hope the other great problems will meet with equal or with even greater success when Mother India will be one of the foremost nations in the world.

If we lay much emphasis on the passing of laws regulating our social customs even more should we lay emphasis on making the ignorant public realize the evils of such customs. They should feel for themselves where they are and what they ought to do if they were to see the improvement of India. Many of the social problems of the country can never be solved till women bring them home to their men. Women

alone can understand women's rights, women's difficulties and women's capacities; they must demand for themselves and what they think they should have. Man indeed cuts a sorry figure in the domain of women. It does not need the appeal of the invincible logic of a woman to make her sex realize its duty to its country. After all what is India? 'A plastic clay in the hands of her gifted women'. The sooner they realize this fact, the nearer the redemption for our country. Why should women waste their life in trifles when the mother needs them for greater things? Is not the woman the 'Shakti' of the house? In her hands lies the power of the world. If she does not show the right path to men, who else can? It is up to us to lead men right by our willing co-operation. We all know for a fact how much Mahatma Gandhi owes his success in life to the hearty co-operation of Mrs. Gandhi in all his endeavours. Again had it not been the willing co-operation of their wives, Motilal Nehru and the late C .R. Das would not have made the big sacrifices which they made in the interests of the country.

The truest test of a nation's civilization lies in the position occupied by her womanhood and the esteem in which she is held. Where she is honoured and free, that nation is progressive and enlightened but where she is looked down upon and consigned to oblivion, the country fails to satisfy the demands of civilization. And in this test India has failed; for the position of her womanhood is that of a chattel or at the most, an unintellectual ornament. And India's regeneration largely lies in the position and prestige she is willing to accord to her womanhood.

- *Revolt*, 6 October 1929

Woes of Indian Womanhood

(By K. M. Balan, B.A.)

"Woman has so long been subject to the disabilities and restrictions with which her progress has been embarrassed that she has become enervated, her mind to some extent paralysed; and like those still more degraded by personal bondage she hugs her chains".

Ever since the infancy of mankind, Eve has been in bondage and subjection to man. She was the first to have been fettered yet she is the last to be freed. As in all other human institutions in the earlier times, the principle of 'might is right' is at the basis of her subjection. Slavery of men in the ancient Rome, the serfdom of the peasants in the mediaeval Europe and the subjection of the Roman Catholics in Great

Britain appearing as they did long after the commencement of the subjugation of woman have now disappeared from the face of the earth. But woman still continues to be a slave. Ardent apostles of freedom and Liberty were rather late in their advocacy of her cause. It was only during the last century that the Feminist movement was started in England, Europe and the United States of America for the assertion of women's rights. In those countries "every step in improvement had been so invariably accompanied by a step made in raising the social position of women that historians and philosophers have been led to adopt their elevation or debasement as on the whole the surest test and the most correct measure of the civilization of a people or an age". Womanhood itself awoke to its position of degradation and an increasing number of women began to record their most emphatic protests against their social conditions.

In England many more of them, not content with domestic freedom alone, petitioned the Parliament for their admission into the Parliamentary suffrage. Claims to be educated as solidly and in the same branches of knowledge as men and to be admitted into professions and occupations closed against them were urged with ever-increasing intensity in the United States. Periodical conventions were continued to be held by an organized party to agitate for the rights of women. France, Italy, Switzerland and Russia soon followed suit. The revolt of all these agitations has been astounding. Not only have the women in England been enfranchised but also they have the unique privilege of having a few of their representative Lady Members enlivening and illumining the erstwhile masculine House of Commons with their charming and elegant presence. To crown all there is that august and Honourable Miss Bondfield adorning the British Cabinet for the first time in its annals.

But before attaining to such political eminence, the English women had fought for and secured social liberty. Divorce, Freedom of marriage, the ability to own property, all these and many more they had secured previous to their political rights and privileges. Hence the Indian women also must turn their attention to their social problems and first attain the freedom in the *imperium in imperio* in which they are being tyrannized over by men.

Marriage is the destination appointed by the society and the Hindu Law gives to woman, the prospect she is brought up to and the object

which it is intended, should be sought by her. "The Shastras enjoin men to marry for the purpose of procreating a son necessary for the continuation of the line of paternal ancestors." So the *sine quo non* of marriage is the procreation of children and only so far is woman honoured as she is helpful to it. Woman is a mere chattel, to be bought and to be sold. Besides, she is not to be trusted and set free in the world, because Manu says that "the woman's evil propensities should be curbed by well employing her in the household duties". In fact the Hindu woman never enjoys freedom in her life. From the parental dominion she is transferred on her marriage *ipso facto* to the marital dominion of her husband. The most unkindest cut of all is the fact that she is absolutely ignored in the matter of the choice of her lifelong companion which is made by the parents. Hence oftener than not she becomes eternally tied down to an ill-suited partner with whom her life is a continuous quarrel and an unbearable burden.

The Hindus proclaim it loudly that the Hindu marriage is a sacrament. "According to the Hindu Shastras it is more a religious than a secular institution." It is not a contract in the real sense of the term. At best it is a unilateral one in which the rights are all on the one side without the corresponding obligations. The husband is ever to command and the wife is to obey. "She has not to reason why, she has but to do and die. The wife lives, moves and has her being in her lord." Even St. Paul is said to have commanded: "Wives, obey your husbands". St. Thiruvalluvar idealises the wife who "prayeth not a God but prayeth unto her lord" and says that "Rain she commandeth and it rains". Such is the tradition in which the Hindu woman is brought up. As John Stuart Mill says: "All women are brought up from the very early years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men : not self-will and Government by self control but submission and yielding to the control of others". Thus being brought up in the chilly and enslaving atmosphere of subjection the wife has to put up with her husband with whom has she been arbitrarily connected whether he is good or bad, kind or cruel. She has to abide by her lot uncomplainingly.

Generally speaking, despite all this obedience on her path, she is as Gandhiji says the 'queen in her home'. But at the same time it is also a fact, which even the sublime words of the Saint of Sabarmathi cannot hide, that there are an appreciable number of wives who find it extremely impossible to lead anything like an amicable and blissful

conjugal life with their husbands. Man is supported and strengthened in the exercise of his sway and authority over woman both by theory or law and by custom and practice. It is all right when the husband is good or the couple are agreeable to each other. But when a husband is by nature a malicious or vicious one this sanction is a terrible weapon in his hand which he wields to the greatest detriment of his wife especially when from the beginning no love has been lost between them. "There is never any want of women who complain of ill-usage by their husbands. There would be infinitely more if complaints were not the greatest of provocations to a repetition and increase of the ill-usage." However brutal a tyrant she may unfortunately be chained to – though she may feel it impossible not to loathe him – he can claim from her and enforce the lowest degradation of a human being, that of being, made the instrument of an animal function contrary to her inclinations.

This is not in the least an exaggeration. It is true that such a kind of tyranny is not universal. But at the same time it must be recognized also that such cases are sufficiently numerous to warrant us to change the law. "If married life were all that it might be expected to be, looking to the laws alone, society would be a hell upon earth." If there are ideal husbands, there are also fiends with human countenance and devils with man's cloak who daily and hourly kill the souls of their poor and miserable wives and from whose fatal clutches it is the duty of some daring Hercules of India to redeem them.

Only one of the myriads of such instance of cruelty is the story narrated by a correspondent in *Young India* of the heart-rending treatment his sister is receiving at the hands of her debaucherous and dissipated husband. The poor girl is said to be whipped and tied to a post to compel her to witness his debaucheries." "Millions may live in peace" but does that fact imply thousands are not groaning and grumbling under the galling yoke of their inhuman husbands?

"The case of cruelty brought to light by the correspondent is an illustration not of the evil in Hinduism but of the evil in Human nature which has been known to express itself under all climes and among people professing different faiths of the world." Very true. None denies the truth of the statement. But granting that the evil pervades all climes and all societies is there at the same time not a remedy and a panacea to it in them, unlike in our august religion? If our faith were simply to

ask such women "to feel as if they had never been married" it is high time we give it up. For "a religion to be permanently influential must be intelligent". However idealistic and noble this suggestion may be it is plainly impracticable for women of ordinary mould. Even if these women feel so, indeed they are feeling for want of a better way out of the difficulty, what about the world of trouble, the woeful misery and the untold anguish of the women who are in need of something more tangible and necessary than the cold philosophy administered by Gandhiji? If widows are pitied and their re-marriage advocated, why not do the same good to these poor, forsaken, pitiable sisters whose lot is as bad, if not worse than, the widows?

Says the Mahatma further: "The remedy lies through cultivating public opinion against unmanly conduct on the part of husbands". This statement is hardly a tribute to the public opinion of the Hindus of which none has a better opinion than Gandhiji himself. For does this not imply that the public opinion at present is in favour of such "womanly conduct on the part of the husbands"? If so it is all the more incumbent on the part of the state to rush in with its efficatious weapons of legislation. According to the reasoning of Gandhiji, if public opinion is against thefts and murder there need be no penal laws. Therefore the presence of the abundance of penal laws argues the absence of public opinion against them. Whatever it might be, nothing is more potent than legislation and nothing less effective than public opinion in such cases. If public opinion were so effective why did the mighty champions of the Child Marriage Bill move Heaven and Earth to bring it to the Statute Book? Mahatmaji blesses the Bill and its principle by suggesting 24 years and 18 years respectively for boys and girls and now in this case he cries against the legal remedy. Perhaps it is one of the inscrutable mysteries of Gandhiji's inconsistencies of which none is more aware than himself! (*See below pp. 510-512)*

If the end of marriage is a union of the two souls and if a man or a woman ought to consummate this union, how can he or she bring about this when each finds absolutely impossible to live and move with his or her partner under the same roof? Here is, however a marked partiality for man in the Hindu law, the logic of which is ununderstandable to us. The husband may discard his wife with impunity, of course he pays a few rupees for her maintenance and go on contracting any number of marriages to infinity. But the forsaken and helpless wife cannot think of any husband! "Surely if a woman is

denied any lot in life but that of being the personal body-servant of a despot and is dependent for everything upon the chance of finding one who may be disposed to make a favourite of her instead of merely a drudge, it is a very cruel aggravation of her fate that she should be allowed to try this chance only once." Therefore humanity and reason alike suggest that there should be a remedy in the form of divorce for the suffering Hindu wife.

Even law both ancient and modern, religious and secular, points to the same course. Says Narada: "When her husband is lost or dead, when he has become a religious ascetic, when he is impotent and when he has become expelled from caste – these are the five causes of legal necessity in which a woman may be justified in marrying another husband". This *Sutra* comprehends and exhausts almost all the reasons that can even make the wife seek to remarry. Not only when the husband is dead but also when he is alive, due to a variety of reasons a woman may get remarried. As the Hindu Widow's Re-marriage Act legalizes the marriage of all widows and as presumptive evidence of the husband's legal death is furnished, the wife is entitled to consider herself a widow and get remarried under the Act. Therefore if even under the Widow Remarriage Act wives can remarry, why not plainly pass a law granting divorce to such women and legalizing their marriage with some other persons when they choose to marry? If impotency, renunciation and ex-communication of the husband are reasons sufficient to warrant a woman to get remarried, why not impossibility of conjugal relation or incompatability of nature constitute an equally good, if not a better reason for the same?

Therefore we have seen that reason, humanity, ancient law and modern law all are in favour of granting divorce to such of the Hindu wives who find it impossible to live with their husbands for sufficient and plausible reasons. It is a matter for sincere joy and congratulation that a Bill to grant divorce is in contemplation by some humane and daring Member of the Legislature, who will be as wholeheartedly supported by the country when he emerges with his timely Bill as was even Harbilas Sarda was supported in his Herculean efforts to bring his momentous Bill to the Statute Book. All honour to him and to our Mother India!

- *Revolt,* 27 October 1929

2 ON MARRIAGE AND CHILD-BEARING

2.1 The Marriage Question

Mr Murugappa's Marriage

The success or failure of a movement depends more upon the results achieved, than upon the empty noise made by its followers. The marriage of Srimati Maragathavalli with Mr. S. Murugappa, Editor of 'Kumaran' following as it does, closely upon the heels of the Pattukkottai Self-respect Volunteers Conference, is a unique one in many respects. In the first place it is a love marriage, unlike other marriages among Hindus, which are mostly business transactions undertaken by the parents of the couple. It is again an inter-caste marriage which is very rare especially among rich communities like the Dhana Vaisyas (*a mercantile caste – editors*). And lastly, it is a widow marriage, which is very often emphasized upon by all well wishers of our country. It goes very much to the credit of Srimati Maragathavalli the Joan of Arc of the Self-respect movement, in having revolted from her parents, boldly marched to the battle field and dealt the final blow to religion and custom, which faced her in her onward march to the goal of individual freedom and equal justice (We ask, has our sister destroyed 'Hinduism' or not?) It will be no credit to the youths if they fail even now to wake up from their slumber, and make ready for the march. It is with overwhelming joy, that we take this occasion to congratulate the couple most heartily for the bold example they have set before the younger generations.

- *Revolt*, 7 July 1929

An Inter-Caste Self-respect Marriage At Erode.

Mr. E. V. Ramasami's mansion at Erode witnessed the celebration of the self-respect inter-caste marriage between Mr. S. Guruswami Sub-editor, "Revolt" and Srimati T. S. Kunjitham, Student, B.A. Senior, Queen Mary's College.

There was a very large gathering of ladies and gentlemen, besides the members, workers, leaders and other followers and admirers of the

self-respect movement. The marriage was conducted wholly under self-respect methods, there being neither the usual ceremonies, nor the intermediary. This is the first instance of a member of the "Mudaliar" community which in South India is next to the Brahmins in orthodoxy and privilege of birth, entering into an inter-caste marriage.

Among those who sent messages of congratulations are, Hon. Mirza S. Ismail Sahib Bahadur, Dewan of Mysore, Hon. Dr. P. Subbarayan, Chief Minister; Hon Sir Muhamad Usman Sahib Bahadur, Home Member; Hon. S. Muthia Mudaliar, Health Minister; Dr. P. Varadarajalu Naidu, Editor, "Tamil Nadu"; Miss De La Hey, Principal Queen Mary's College; Mr. R. K. Shanmugham Chettiar, M.L.A. and Janab. M. Jamal Muhammad Sahib, Sir A.P. Patro, Mr. K. Ayappan, Editor "Sahodaran", Mr. W. P. A. Soundrapandya Nadar, Mr. T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, M.L.C., and Mr. P. T. Rajan, M.L.C.

In the evening there was held a public meeting under the presidency of Mr. S. Ramanathan, M.A. B.L., when the married couple besides others addressed the gathering on "Social Reform".

– *Revolt*, 19 January 1930

Our Achievements

Elsewhere is published the news of the Self-respect inter-caste marriage of the Sub-Editor or our paper, Mr. S. Guruswami with Srimathi T.S. Kunjitham. The Self-respect movement in its manifold activities and all-embracing programme of social reconstruction, has done (all only with the co-operation and sympathy of the thinking public) what little it has been able to do within a short period of about five years. In the abolition of priesthood, which was its first programme of work, thousands of ceremonies and rites, were, within the first two years, either wholly stopped or done without the interference of the priestly classes. Such news of stopping the meaningless rites and ceremonials and doing away with the intermediary either in worshipping 'God' or in obsequies, came to us in such large numbers, that, as time went on, we were forced, due to want of space, to stop publishing such news in our vernacular weekly, the 'Kudi-Arasu'.

Then the next stage came when the Self-respect League demanded its members and sympathisers to encourage widow-marriages and inter-caste marriage. Such marriages besides being devoid of the intermediary are also conducted without any of the meaningless ceremonies and

superstitious observances. And it is unnecessary to inform that inter-dining also becomes a concomitant necessity on such occasions. And the marriage of Mr. Guruswami can be said to satisfy all the above conditions. Inter-caste marriages are looked upon as something of a revolutionary idea or even as a blasphemy especially by certain orthodox castes in our country; and among such castes, the bridegroom's is also one. So it is no wonder that this back numbered community cries, 'blasphemy!' at this event and laid at the time of the marriage, as many hindrances on his way as they could. It is a matter rather, for pity than shame, that all his nearest relations boycotted the marriage *en bloc*. For, has not caste been polluted when a member of the 'Mudaliar' community married a member of the 'Vellala' community! (1)

But the very fact that such prominent men as the Dewan of Mysore, the Members and Ministers of Government, Editors of Newspapers, big businessmen, wealthy landlords, members of the Legislature and other innumerable influential ladies and gentleman have sent messages of congratulations to the married couple indicates that there is not only a strong support to such reforms, but also there is a remarkable change in the social atmosphere itself. We heartily congratulate the bride and the bridegroom for their bold step, and "eagerly welcome even inter-provincial and inter-racial marriages", as one of the messages of congratulations ran.

- *Revolt*, 19 January 1930

An Up-to Date Announcement

A Shanghai message of December 30 says: the trend towards modernism in China was never more clearly illustrated than by an announcement in this morning's native news papers by a wedded Chinese couple: "Why go to all the bother of having a wedding ceremony in the presence of witnesses and with the permission of the elders? This is to announce we are now husband and wife, having married yesterday."

Simplification of marriage ceremonies and the avoidance of unnecessary wedding expenses is one of the pressing problems that has got to be faced by every progressive nation to-day. We in India are not very much behind hand of the Chinese as some may imagine. Somebody in Calcutta recently conceived the idea of issuing invitations to his friends on the occasion of his marriage in the following terms: "Mr. So-and so and Miss. So-and-so have agreed to live together as man and wife. You are invited to tea on such-and-such (date) at such-and-such (hour)." The Chinese have evidently found out that invitations and tea are a costly affair. They have therefore sought the aid of the Press and have taken to matrimonial announcements. We in South India have done one better. We have realized that advertisements in the Press are too costly for us. Again we should seek freedom from the thralldom of the Press magnates and advertisement managers. We have wisely taken to the platform. Numerous weddings are to-day celebrated all over the Tamil Districts at *ad hoc* public meetings assembled under the auspices of local branches of the Self-respect league. One fine morning the tom-tom goes round the village announcing a public meeting at the local *chavadi* during the afternoon. The village folk assemble at the appointed hour. They choose a chairman who presents the couple to the audience and announces the fact of their marriage. Speeches are made wishing prosperity for the happy pair. The meeting dissolves and that ends the ceremony. No flowers, no sandal paste, no pansupari. No lighting charges incurred, the meeting is during daytime. No feasts; no, not even tea. But then there is one bill to be paid. Four annas is due to the Vetti (*a 'low caste' village servant – editors*) with the tom-tom. Well, until communism comes to stay, publicity must cost something or other. The poor Vetti is a necessary evil. We need not grudge him the four annas. Shall we recommend the prudent economy of the Self-respect League to those self conceited "up-to-date" Chinese?

- *Revolt*, 23 January 1929

Marriage and Divorce

Chapman Cohen

If one wishes for a crucial example of the unadulterated nuisance religion in general and Christianity in particular is, when social questions are on the carpet, one may find it in the discussions going on concerning marriage and divorce. The important thing about marriage and the one that should govern consideration is its social aspect. And the fundamental fact of this social aspect is the family and the perpetuation of the race. Whatever secondary and tertiary developments may take place with regard to the relations of the sexes, however much mere sexual attraction may be sublimated into love, this fact remains true. The attractions of sex is nature's lure for the perpetuation of the race. Apart from children it need be *no concern of the State on what condition men and women choose to live together. In fact, it is of no concern to the State*. The State does not say that a man may not live with one woman or more, or a woman live with one man or more, on whatever conditions they please. It does not even say that they may not beget children as the fruit of such unions. All it says is that if the State is asked to enforce a contract between two persons, then the contract must be one to which it is a party, and it lays down the main lines of the contracts it will enforce. Up to that point everything is quite clear. It is the child that creates the problem: it is the child and all that the child involves that is least talked about. But for the child there would be no reason at all for marriage laws. Social opinion is quite another question. That is often more drastic than legal enactment and badly needs education.

Now a sanely civilized society would recognize marriage laws and marriage customs as social facts to be discussed along lines of social service or disservice. Laws and customs of marriage that best serve the interests of all concerned are the best and there is no other reasonable basis for discussion. To talk of any institution as 'sacred', meaning that it must be neither modified nor destroyed, is downright nonsense and treason to the real interests of Society. Either in theory or in fact changes take place and are generally the more unpleasant because theory does not admit their legitimacy. Make it a crime to question the powers of a king and an axe, or a bullet, settles the problem. Make marriage the one contract between human beings that must be neither modified nor cancelled and both men and women find irregular and often unpleasant ways out of the difficulty. The contract is cancelled in fact,

while remaining uncancelled in theory. No power on earth, and we need not bother about power anywhere else, can compel a man and a woman to be loyal to each other if the affection that is the cement and the essence of the union, no longer exists. Whether a man and a woman can live together in terms of affection and mutual esteem that man and woman alone can tell, and if it is impossible real marriage has ceased to be. The State in such cases does not annul marriage, it merely sets its signature to an amendment that already exists.

So also with the question of children. Whether a man and woman have one child, a number of children or no children at all, are their business and theirs alone. It is useless talking about a decline of population or the evils of a stationary one. A stationary population is an evil only to politicians and militaries who count the value of men and women in terms of soldier power or in terms of the capacity to beat down other nations; or to Roman Catholic priests who wish to see men and women breeding like rabbits and for exactly the same reason that stock-breeders like to see an increase in their cattle. As Ruskin said, it is not a vital question whether a man have one child or six children. But it is a vital question whether the children he has deserve to be hanged or not.

The whole question might be sensibly discussed and solved with comparative ease but for the intrusion of religion. From that fog of superstition which shrouds all institutions in their earlier stages, marriage is the last to emerge. For various reasons women in her fundamental functional aspects is a special object of superstitious dread and her relations as woman with man has to be surrounded with a number of precautions against supernatural dangers. For this reason the priest, the medicine man, obtained a fairly solid grip on the institution of marriage and vested interest has prompted him to fight hard to retain it. In our own times marriage and the child represent his last remaining hope. In social and scientific affairs his grasp is palpably weakening, so much so that large numbers of priests no longer claim supremacy there; they are content if they can be admitted to the rank as students on a level term with others.

But when the question of marriage or divorce or birth control is raised, we at once find the clergy rushing in with talk about what Our Lord said, as though anything could equal the stupidity of going back a couple of thousand years to see what a mythical celibate had to say about family relations, to settle the question for men and women living

today. Not alone do a number of celibate and other priests set themselves up as the final authorities on marriage and divorce but our glorious press, with its determination to support anything established and its resolve to do nothing and say nothing that can offend the most stupid of its subscribers, appeal to the clergy for their opinion on marriage as though their claim for supremacy was beyond question.

In all these discussions much is said about marriage being a religious institution. Marriage is nothing of the kind. Biologically it has nothing to do with religion. Sociologically it has nothing to do with religion. And, legally, in this country at least, it has nothing to do with religion. The only legal marriage in this country is the civil marriage. It is true that marriages are performed in a Church, and that a parson is the official who 'ties the knot'. But that is by the way. The parson performs the marriage because he receives a license from the secular Stare to do so, precisely as a Registrar has his authority from the same source. For legal purposes the Church simply takes the place of the Registry Office is recognized. The religious ceremonies that accompany the marriage are of no more legal consequence than jumping over a broomstick. The proof of this is that while the religious ceremonies differ and are permitted to differ, the secular part must remain unaltered. So far as the legal marriage is concerned, the parson, with the authority of the State, for the time being and for the purpose of the marriage, takes the place of the Registrar.

Moreover, the Church, having been licensed as a place in which marriages can be performed by a person licensed by the State to perform them, and by such a person only, no citizen, whatever his opinions can legally be denied the right of a Church marriage. An Atheist has as much right to be married there as anyone else. I do not know that any particular parson could be compelled to marry him, but another might be found, and it is an open question of how far an action in the Courts might compel some parson, probably a bishop – if the bishop declined to compel one of his subordinates to act. The parson is not appointed by the State, and so the State may not be able to compel him honestly to perform the duties for which he is paid. In any case the fact, the vital fact, is that when a clergyman talks of a religious marriage, the reply is that no such marriage is recognized by English Law. There are marriages accompanied with religious ceremonies, but that is another question. And in Scotland, marriage is so clearly a civic contract that marriage before witnesses is, I believe, still legally recognized.

In any case, if we wish to see such subjects as Marriage, Divorce or Birth-control discussed reasonably, or settled profitably, we must clear religious influences out of the way. It is a pity that those who stand forward as reformers in these matters do not say so plainly and boldly. I do not say it is a pity they do not *see* this, because to say as much would be a reflection on their intelligence. But there is often a long step between ceasing to believe in religion and ceasing to be afraid of its malignant activities. Every one of the questions touched on – Marriage, Divorce, Birth-control has found its bitterest, its most ignorant and its most intolerant opposition in those who were animated by religious belief. With every one of these questions the trail had to be blazed by Freethinkers before it could be discussed in the light of a more or less complete publicity. Rational ideas of marriage and divorce and of the conscious control of population owe the publicity they have today and the more enlightened opinion that prevails to the Freethinkers of the past who saw, and said, that the influence of religion must be curtailed if advance was to be made. And that statement is as true today, and as pertinent today as ever it was. If the essence of marriage is mutual love and respect, let us have a little less of the policeman in the picture, whether he wears the familiar dress of the 'bobby', or the black gown of the priest. Where love and respect have no existence the outlook for the man, the woman and the child is black and bad. If man is ever to become really master of his own destiny, it cannot be a crime for him to say whether he shall have one child or a dozen. But such subjects must be discussed with the priest shut out if we are ever to reach reasonable and healthful conclusions. It is the health and happiness of men and women with which we are concerned. The opinions of gods and Church Councils are interesting only so far as they help to illustrate aberrations of which the human mind is capable

– *Revolt,* 27 October 1929

Marriage

Prof. R.D. Karve writes in the Congress special Number of the *Bombay Chronicle*:

A Mouse-Trap

Marriage almost in all countries bears at present a great resemblance to a mouse-trap. It is very easy to get in, but extremely difficult to get out of it, even where this is at all possible. This is in fact the only kind of contract which cannot be broken even when both the parties wish to break it. Even in countries and communities where divorce is allowed, it is never allowed on the ground that both the parties want it. Adultery by one party has to be alleged and proved in court, and if the court suspects that both parties wish it to be proved, it is called collusion and divorce is refused – a very curious state of affairs, and one which does not argue much commonsense on the part of legislators. Is it any wonder that this results in much unhappiness even where divorce is possible and, of course, much more where it is not. Is it any wonder that Marriage as it stands today has to answer the formidable charge that instead of contributing to human happiness as all desirable social institutions should, it becomes one of the greatest obstacles to happiness for the majority?

Love not a Matter of Will Power

One cause of this state of things, at any rate, lies on the surface. Marriages in this country and to a large extent in some other countries too, are arranged by parents or guardians, who naturally tend to give importance to things which the parties concerned, would probably ignore, and ignore aspects which are of the utmost importance to the young persons concerned. Even when marriages are not entirely arranged by parents, it very often happens in this county that the two persons have not even casually met before; they are indissolubly bound together for life. Even in civilized Europe, marriages are more often a matter of economic convenience than of a genuine liking for each other, not to speak of romantic love. If such a marriage is successful, it can only be so by accident. Even where a mutual liking exists to start with, there is no guarantee that it will last for a life-time, and this is where the very idea of a permanent marriage becomes ridiculous, as the husband and wife are supposed to promise to love each other for life. Love is not a matter of will power. Nobody can experience genuine love for another merely

because he or she has made a promise, perhaps twenty or thirty years back. It is possible to remain faithful to each other a physical way, but this can hardly be called happiness. Indeed it may become positive misery to be compelled to stay with a person who may have become completely indifferent or even hateful. But this is what marriage means, and respectability requires people to grin and bear it, however much they may suffer inwardly. As I have said, this tells more especially on the woman.

Deeper Causes of Unhappiness

But the causes of unhappiness in marriage are often of a deeper origin than mere incompatibility of temper though this is bad enough. For woman, marriage is the only recognized way of satisfying the sex urge which, in spite of certain defective or superannuated persons, is one of the most powerful in nature. Happiness in marriage is only possible for the woman if this fundamental need is satisfied by the husband. Otherwise she has either to suffer in silence as a good many of them do, or seek other men's company with or without the husband's permission (for there are husbands who permit it), or apply for divorce in case that is possible, in order to find happiness in another marriage and take the risk of another failure. Sexologists are aware that one of the most frequent causes at the bottom of divorce cases is sexual incompatibility though of course, this is not alleged in court very often.

Sexual Incompatibility

Now sexual incompatibility is a thing which cannot even be guessed at from a mere acquaintance, however intimate, if it stops short of actual sex experience. In other words, it cannot be ascertained except by a trial marriage. Though this will horrify people who are not accustomed to scientific reasoning, such marriages were actually common in Scotland and Germany. In Scotland it appears that a man and woman could, by a public declaration, take each other on trial and stay together for any year and a day and then get married definitely or break off as they chose. If there was a child, the responsibility in case of separation would lie on the one who wanted to discontinue. In Germany, a trial marriage was allowed till pregnancy, when a definite marriage was obligatory. The child in these cases obviously hampered the complete liberty of the couple. But now that artificial means of contraception are known in all civilized countries and can be obtained if one takes the trouble, this difficulty has practically disappeared.

Economic Dependence of Woman

They only other difficulty in the way of complete liberty for women, was their economic dependence on man. In America even this has disappeared, and is fast disappearing in other countries, and women are becoming better qualified to earn their living. The result is that girls who would normally in former times have married for a living are taking advantage of contraceptive knowledge to enjoy of (sic) being cast off by their lovers. Indeed if we are to take Judge Lindsay's word for it, men now complain that it is the girls who cast them off when they no longer like them. Of course the parents of the girls do not know what they are doing, but we have the learned judge's word for it that it is happening on a very large scale. Girls have been known to say quite openly – in America – that women can never be the equals of men so long as they are not quite as safe from the consequences of occasional adventures in sex experience as men are. What audacity! Nay, they are even claiming the right to become mothers, if they choose, without becoming wives, or slaves.

Not only have girls acquired this unheard of effrontery, but people of Judge Lindsay's standing are declaring themselves openly in sympathy with them if not in agreement. He advocates what he calls Companionate Marriage. Another writer puts forward the view that the satisfaction of the sex urge should not be confined to procreative purposes as the Mahatma would have it, but is perfectly allowable for recreative purposes. This open revolt against the old standards may take a long time to reach India, but it is bound to come, and I for one will not try to hamper it.

- *Revolt*, 13 February 1929

Divorce in Hindu Marriage

We publish elsewhere in this issue, the text of the resolution concerning the dissolution of Hindu Marriage, passed in the U. P. Social Conference, presided over by the veteran woman leader, Mrs. Uma Nehru. We wish to draw the attention of our readers to the note of warning sounded by Mr. Chintamani that if men were lukewarm to the cause of women, the inauguration of a husband's protection league will be the inevitable sequel. No reform is complete without marriage reform, and in our opinion, nothing is crueler than the so called sacrament of Hindu marriage. In countries where monogamy is in vogue, it may be argued that divorce is unnecessary as affecting both parties. But in the Hindu Society, man is free to contract as many marriages as possible, but woman is left in the lurch, a prey to man's cruelty and desertion. While advanced marriage systems are found wanting in perfection, even such small attempt at marriage reforms as this must not find opposition in a country that clamours for liberation. Orthodoxy will be also busy with their interpretations of the Vedas, and the learned expositions of the subtleties of Hindu Philosophy. Advocates of Devadasi institutions and Child marriages will be quoting their usual scriptures. The pandits are already busy with their sing song lectures interspersed with profuse quotations from the puranas. And there is the inevitable god to help these preservers of religion. We wish to remind them that Miss. Mayo's second book is already out. Let us not, in our piety and godliness make her purse heavier, by supplying more materials for a third volume.

U. P. Social Conference: Dissolution of Hindu Marriage

The fifth session of the U. P. Social Conference was held on Sunday the 31st March at Lucknow, under the Presidency of Mrs. Uma Nehru. The following resolution was moved by Mr. Pandit Krishna Prasad Kaul:

"This conference is of opinion that steps be taken at an early date to enact legislation to sanction of dissolution of Hindu Marriage at least in cases of (1) desertion and (2) cruelty by husband."

He said that it was natural that a new movement should meet with misgivings, fears and unintelligent opposition. His appeal was not addressed to those who were opposed to all reform but to the supporters of the social conference to the advocates of social reform.

This resolution was complementary to the resolution on widow remarriage. If the conference allowed a widow to remarry in the event of the physical death of the husband, why should the conference not allow remarriage in the event of desertion and cruelty by husbands when her condition was no better than that of widowhood? It was no use quoting statistics from France, America and other foreign countries as the grounds of divorce were limited only to desertion and cruelty.

Indian conditions were different. It might be urged that this innovation was not necessary for Hindu society in view of the rarity of cases covered by this resolution. But he was not convinced that such cases were as few as not to call for a legal remedy. Statistics were not available but his investigations had shown that in the small community of Kashmiri Brahmans there were 14 cases of desertion of wives by husbands, out of which in about half the cases, the husbands had taken to new wives. He gave further instances of widows' homes, a fair percentage of the inmates of which were not widows, but deserted wives either actually driven out by husbands or forced to leave their husbands because of the impossibility of living with them. He then took up the commonly urged plea that the Hindu marriage was a spiritual sacrament, not a civil contract. If it was a religious sacrament, an indissoluble spiritual tie, it must be so for both parties, not only for the weaker party. In practice it was the reverse of an indissoluble spiritual tie for the husband.

He further instanced cases of contractual marriage from the Vedas and said that though such marriages might have been few, they were not unknown. He then quoted from Manu who contemplates five causes under which a wife can remarry in the lifetime of the husband. Katyayana and Vashista also recognize about half a dozen causes similarly. Though the word divorce might not occur in the authorities, remarriages were recognized. Even if it be granted that the causes calling for the legal remedy of divorce were very few among them, there was no valid reason why justice should be denied to even a few dumb and oppressed victims. He wound up with a passionate appeal to the audience to carry his resolution unlike the previous conferences which had thrown it out.

Mr. Chinthamani, seconding the resolution, first referred to the militant statement hung right above the head of the president that women must be emancipated from the bondage of men and said that he had been discussing with some friends whether the time had not come for a

husband's protection league to be formed so that the tables might not be turned against them. Proceeding, he said that the resolution before them was a serious proposition which deserved the complete and active support of every enlightened man. If the basis of the social reform movement was to secure justice to every individual unit of society, if its motive and purpose was to see that no section of the community suffered from disabilities on account of birth or of sex, he thought that no one could offer any valid opposition to the resolution. Mr. Chintamani added that the delegates who had assembled in the conference would forfeit all title to be called social reformers or advocates of justice and liberty if they did not vote for their resolution.

Mr. Surendra Nath Verma moved an amendment which urged a dissolution particularly in cases of misconduct, bigamy, desertion and cruelty by either party to the marriage. Pandit Iqbal Narain Gurtu seconded the amendment moved by Mr. Verma. Pandit Krishna Prasad Kaul, the mover, announced that if the conference was in favour of widening the scope of his resolution he was wholeheartedly in favour of it. He restricted its scope only to make it more acceptable to the conference. He accepted the amendment.

The resolution as amended was put to vote and carried.

- *Revolt*, 24 April 1929

Revision of Social Customs: Bane of Consanguineous Marriages

The following is an extract of the speech delivered by Dr. J. Munsiff, Director of Public Health, Bombay at a public meeting of Parsis:

I have chosen the subject of *"Social Customs and Race Degeneration"* for this evening's discourse, not without some misgiving. I admit, knowing how very sensitive people are where their cherished customs are concerned, because I feel, and felt it very strongly too, that unless some of our customs are revised, India will not be able to produce the type of man needed to face the present day competition. Most of us are content to leave well alone in the happy belief that everything is for the best in this good old world. Things may or may not be for the best. But those of us, who have the good of our country at heart and are responsible for the physical welfare of their countrymen would be failing in their duty if they were to keep the truth back from their people merely because it was unpalatable. After these remarks, I hope you will believe me that whatever I say on this subject is not said in any narrow spirit of carping criticism, but with a profound belief, in the necessity for revising some of our customs and an ardent desire to see Indians holding their own with men and of other civilized countries.

The terrific quantitative and qualitative loss in our country is often attributed to various causes from machinations of a Foreign Government to the malign influence of the climate, according to the creed of the author. But what we are far too prone to forget is that we breed, rear and feed out men on the *Tenth* century principles and they cannot bear the *Twentieth* century strain. The greatest tragedy in India is that a sound body and a cultured brain are seldom combined in the same person, or even in the same race.

We come across many "brainy", "nervy" individuals who in spite of all their brilliancy lack sound judgment. On the other hand, we meet athletes, in smaller numbers, perhaps, whose brains would do no discredit to a sparrow. Neither of this class is going to benefit the State or the country because the exacting conditions of the present day civilisation demand a type of man sound in physique with an alert intellect, and a well-balanced judgment.

Sentiment may be all right for domestic use, but believe me; it often provides the biggest barrier to National advancement. Customs creep

insidiously and outlast their utility. India is the home of "Mamul" (*custom – editors*) and it is not my intention to attack any time-honoured custom whether beneficial or otherwise. All I wish is to place before you a few facts and leave it to you to decide whether you need to put your house in order or not. There must be one or more custom prevailing among us which is responsible for our going down hill physically, and, I personally, am inclined to attribute most of our troubles to cousin marriages. I am fully conscious of the diversity of opinions which exists on the subject and I am also aware of the fact that cousin marriages have been prevalent in our community from time immemorial. But I have good reason to believe that the instinct of keeping the money of the family in the family has brought the fashion of such consanguineous marriages a good deal more in vogue, with the advancing material prosperity of the race, during the last three or four generations. Also, it would not be wrong to conclude that while the baneful effects of such consanguineous marriages may have been counteracted by the environmental influences of the easy open air life our forefathers led a hundred years ago, the exacting conditions of the modern life intensify their effects and produce the harmful results we are just becoming conscious of.

It is a universally acknowledged fact that if there is a taint or defect in a family, it is likely to be intensified in the offspring if consanguineous marriages occur in that family. Our everyday life begins in that family. Our everyday life brings us in contact with men and women who are descended from consanguineous families as well as offsprings of independent stocks and if we only take the trouble to observe we should not fail to notice that the latter are of far finer material.

Leaving aside the parsis for a moment, I shall give you the examples of two other small communities. There is a sect of Mahomedans in this city (Bombay) who on account of their small numbers, high standard of culture and education, and emancipation of their women, have had to limit their choice in marriage to their own community, and you see visible signs of physical degeneration in this, one of the most enlightened communities in the Moslem world.

Another example – in Bradford – there is a small community of settlers from Somerset, who migrated to Yorkshire, about 60 years ago. They all belong to the working class, but for some reason best known to themselves, they have remained exclusive and married only among

their own people. The result of this consanguinity is that the average intelligence of a child from this colony is 38 percent below that of Bradford child. They all belong to the working class, work in the same industries as the Bradford folk, and have the same standard of living. And we cannot ascribe the mental inferiority of their children to any circumstances other than consanguinity of blood.

Whatever the Doctrinaire may say and whatever theories he may hold, we cannot get away from the hard facts I have placed before you. As I have told you already I am not here this evening to "down" any custom, to ask you to introduce radical changes merely on the strength of my word. All I want is to convince you of the need of an independent enquiry being undertaken into our customs and the causes of our racial degeneration and if I have convinced you of the necessity for such an enquiry I shall feel I have attained my object in coming here this evening.

(*The lecturer has admirably pointed out the physiological reasons for the degradation of families contracting consanguineous marriages. In this connection we wish to remind our readers of an article about "Mixed Marriages in Turkey" which appeared in our journal some time back (*See below pp. 596-597 – editors*) This extract of the speech further shows how apart from the evil of narrow-mindedness, consanguineous marriages have also a deleterious effect upon the mental and physical developments of mankind. It is really a miserable lot of India, (we fear we would be labeled as pessimistic) that while other nations are favoring racial mixture, she does not come forward even for inter-caste marriages. The lecturer therefore aptly remarks that "mamul" has already done its worst in India. And if "mamul" should go, we need not say its mother and foster-mother God and religion should vanish; and that is possible only if their raw material – Brahminism is destroyed. That is what the Self-respectors are striving to do – Ed.]*

– *Revolt*, 1September, 1929

The Marriage Tragedy

(By Kirk)

***Place*:** A furnished drawing room in a bungalow.

***Time* :** Evening.

Kamala, the English educated landlady is seated in a chair, in a pensive mood. Vasudev, Kamala's husband, comes in with a tennis racket in his hand.

Vasudev: So, you are here, Kamala, up, up. It's high time we are in the club. Make haste, or we shall be late for the tournament. We shouldn't, you know, disappoint our friends that eagerly await our presence in the tennis court.

Kamala: Ah, my! beloved! (hides a deep sigh behind a beguiling smile) Our friends? Yes, yes, I mustn't disappoint them, but ...

Vas: Well, Kamala, I can't be lending any ears to your buts. I don't know what's happening to you nowadays. Make haste, it's already late.

Kam: Your ears can't forbear my buts, is that so? Then … have I your permission to say no?

Vas: (in a fury) I am completely upset, Mrs. Vasudev, I am alive to the fact that you are becoming cold day by day. The fault is not yours. I curry your favour, and you spurn at me. I worship you and you crush me under your feet. The fault is absolutely mine, that of my love, my care and my sacrifice.

(Kamala stares straight a Vasudev's face, and peals of contemptuous laughter roll from her lips).

Vas: You laugh, madam, to make me burn with shame? I can put up with your coldness and contempt no more. No more shall I be the docile fool that I was, to be excusing your willfulness, foolhardiness.

Kam: Well done, my dear Sir. Please don't be startled when I address you Sir. Once in your life, you speak in my presence like a man. Can your courage, the badge of your race, face a naked truth, uttered from the lips of one whom you call Mrs. Vasudev?

Vas: (*Throws away the racket in a fury*) Give the beggar a horse and the devil will ride it! Go on.

Kam: My dear sir, I want to be plain to you. We have lived together these five years and you know I have played my part very well. I cannot do so any more. I will never more be your wife, a dandy adorned to please others, a slave girl dancing to the tune of her master, incense to the vanity of an autocrat. The rebellious nature in me, so far dormant is asserting itself and I shall say what I feel. In short, I can never more be your female. I say I am a woman.

Vas: The devil take you! Aye, I was a fool indeed. I implicitly believed you. It was my fault, none other's. Dare you say before the thinking world that you are a woman, only now that you discard your husband. Nay, nay! It is only now that you have degraded yourself to the position of a female, a wretched bitch.

(*Feels for the revolver in the waist coat pocket but is overpowered with passion and with difficulty checks an outburst of tears.)*

I now see, clear as crystal, what is wrong with you. The devil of Ramakant, the bragging vagabond of a social reformer has worked you up. I now understand why you are cold to me, why you turn pale in my presence. Your tenderness for that villain, you're panting after his presence, is an open book to me. You don't speak all this. It is he that speaks from your stealthy bosom. Alas! I am undone. For God's sake, Kamala remember that you are a mother of two children. I beg of you not to become the mother of infamy and degradation as well. Don't be ungrateful to me. Oh God!.

Kam: (*With indignation*) 'Ungrateful'! No more of such nonsense, please. I need none of your gods to threaten me into servility, wretchedness and hypocrisy. Nights and days have I spent bestowing deep thought on your adoration, your care on my behalf. The blood of a wife has completely gone dry in me. I only burn with indignation. I don't mind your shooting me down as you would do your bitch when she is no more useful. I will be glad that my life's mission is fulfilled. You hunt me down with your revolver even as you hunted after me in those days. You will be hailed as a martyr for your chivalry. Why should I shrink from such an honourable death? I welcome with all my heart a death that will end the life of shame and hypocrisy, the life of a wife.

Vas: (*temper cools down*) Kamala, my beloved! Pardon my folly I provoked you unwittingly. You are sick. Your face is as pale as marble. I was a fool to have spoken harsh words that cut you to the quick. You are getting delirious, my darling. Rest, rest Kamala on the sofa. (*lending his hand to*

help her to the sofa) Pardon me, my heart's delight! I am sure Kamala, you are not serious.

Kam: (*tearing away from Vasudev's clasp*) Sick indeed, Sir! I am neither delirious nor playful. I am really serious when I tell you that no true love can exist between man and woman. I can never be a wife. Don't doubt my seriousness. I was never so serious before in my life. You crave for my love and I will be too glad to give it, but alas! I have tried and tried in vain. It is not possible for any woman. Let me tell you what I feel. Truth is like a mountain torrent which no human hand can prevent from pouring forth with all its force.

Pause and think you cannot but realize that no woman can love a man under the present circumstances of our society. Nobody is at fault if love is so strained. Love is the life blood of equal partners. To expect love of a slave girl for her master is utter idiocy. That is the bane of our race, as well. We may play our parts as wives too well, win the applause of men, be praised for the so-called virtue of chastity, be even worshipped for our feminine qualities of head and heart. The seed of slavery all the while lies hidden in the tell-tale bosom of a wife. It is no wonder if we hate men the husbands, and hide it behind the kiss of our rosy lips.

(*Kamala speaks out*)

Know ye, Gentleman, I am born of educated parents. I have a brother named Shanker, two years younger than myself. Please lend your ears to my life's story which is the story of the woman-race as well. Our parents were English educated People. They surrounded us with all comforts. They brought us up in a style which will win for them applause from the present day society. Ever since the day I was able to think, I began to feel that I was a girl. My parents bestowed special attention on me. My brother, even though younger then myself, used to wait upon me at home and escort me when outside. The boys of my locality looked upon me and girls of the place with awe as something abnormal that requires special attention. It was in this fashion that society sowed in us the seed of feminism. Then came the days of dress and ornaments. The boys were free to roam about and loot all pleasure in play. They need pleasure, no beauty. But beauty is a thing specially needed for a girl. She must be well dressed. She must be made attractive. There is nothing in her of intrinsic value. She must be made loveable. So I was made to shine in coloured saries and shining blouses. My nose and

ears were bored and pendants of barbaric lustre were thrust in them.

This was the first schooling I had in my house and I had learnt to look upon myself as one who has no right of existence but for the attraction, pleasure and adoration of others. Subsequently I was sent to a school where all girls were segregated. I graduated in the Queen Mary's College. The education that we received then could not cure us of our inferiority complex but I should even say, aggravated it. Epic works and romantic novels bristling with sentimental love made women feel that they were beautiful doves, whom men should hunt after, capture and fondle. This is the essence of romance. Man overtures and women swoon is the crux of epic theme.

We had our religious books too. They taught us that we were fallen ones who are a stumbling block to the heaven bound pilgrims. Scriptural morality taught me to look down upon women and enjoined upon them to forsake themselves if they should follow the path of righteousness. The burning sense of our slavery would have burst forth into a conflagration but we were helpless. We were merely groping in the dark.

It was then that the women in the West rose up against the tyranny of man, I mean the Suffragist movement. A ray of hope in the dark horizon, and we thanked ourselves. A sense of womanhood asserted itself in us mingled with a passionate hatred for man. No more shall man feast his hungry eyes upon the long black tresses, we thought. Some of us shingled our hair and this raised a storm of protest in the country. Scandal was rife and my parents were unhappy for a time. Time cured society as well as my parents of their superstition. At least they begin to think that it is a calamity that they cannot avert. The women won their battle and the women franchise was an accomplished fact.

Our revolution, silent though it was, worked a miracle in some of the young men of our country, whose catholicism of love made them knight-errands. Our hearts beat violently to find them boisterously praising to the skies the shingled heads and the spectacled eyes. Flowing tresses and lotus eyes had ceased to charm them.

It was at this stage I married Mr. Vasudev. I thought I had freedom, I had love, but alas! It was a startling revelation. Marriage is a fall, a literal fall – for a woman and her freedom in marriage is a sham. Once more I felt I was a degraded being. I discovered that a woman in womanly features cannot be a man's equal partner. She must be masculine if she

should attract man. This created a disgust in my womanhood, the gilded slavery. Marriage with a man called Vasudev made me Mrs. Vasudev. There was no place for my ego. I longed to hear my name Kamala pronounced. None but my husband did dare to address me by my name but that could not please me, because, behind the sentimental wordy phrases lay hidden the naked fact that I was his appendage.

The man who calls himself my husband says he lavished his love upon me. He says he sacrificed everything for my comfort. True, but he wants me to be grateful for all that. Gentlemen, you see for yourselves if I have not repaid all his adoration in the same coin? He played the husband and I played the part of a wife. I pleased his friends, who were satisfied with my masculine portrayal. It pleased him to lavish every thing valuable on me and the praises of his friends was sufficient recompense. I played his games of tennis and football and made my husband feel proud in his possession of a well trained animal. Some of the ill informed sisters laughed at my new ways but it only added to my value and I was a Kohinoor in the diadem of my husband-king. I gave birth to two boys so that they may inherit his property and feed his fancies. He never felt that I had an individuality.

No man ever feels that a woman has her ego as well. She has as much right as man to think for herself and to act for herself. Man wants that she must be a good wife, in other words a licensed prostitute.

Now, the woman in me stands up in revolt against the shams of religion, tradition, morality and culture enslaves women. My voice is the voice of a woman, the voice of my race. I shall declare from house tops that a free woman can never more be the wife of a man. The future woman shall be a potent woman, the guiding star of her own destinies.

(*Turning to Mr. Valued*)

Sir, do you now understand why I am resolved not to be a wife. I am sick in flesh, blood and soul. The society with its ignorant brutality and impotent enlightenment makes life intolerable for me. Mr. Vasudev, shoot me, I beseech you, I beg of you, in the name of the love you bear me, to shoot me down, and end the life of a woman's shame. With your chivalrous shot, complete the marriage tragedy.

(*Screen falls*)

– *Revolt*, 24 April 1929

The Marriage Problem – A Dialogue

(By Miss Gnanam)

(Saraswati, a Brahmin girl of 16 is reading in the Sixth Form. Her brother Balan who has just passed his B.L., has married in a wealthy family and is living with his wife as a young 'pensioner'. Their parents died when the girl was 8 and Balan has been looking after his sister as a guardian. One evening on her return from school, Balan meets her at the park, and they sit down to talk).

Saraswati: Brother dear, I suppose you know my examination is very near. Don't you?

Balan: Yes, sister. That is why I do not wish to disturb you often about your ma…

Saraswati (*interrupting*): Damn it, brother. How is it whenever I talk of my school you never pay heed to it, but begin something else which is bitter to me? Have you settled with our uncle to arrange for my college study? The sooner you do it, the better for…

Balan (*interrupting*): That's not so urgent sister. Do you not think it proper to get yourself married before you enter the college? It is most likely that Nathan will marry some other girl, in which case, you will be unfortunate to …

Saraswati (*in an angry mood, interrupting*): Will you not refrain from talking about my marriage? Is the marriage for me or for you? If it is for me, then leave it to me. Thereby you are not only wounding me, but are wounding others by creating in me an *unreasonable* hatred of others, which I regard as one of the worst crimes that one like me should shudder to commit. Please talk of something else; otherwise I shall be forced to depart from this place.

Balan (*scrutinizing his sister's facial expressions*): Saraswati, don't be irritated so soon. While I am proud to possess an intelligent and modest sister in you, I cannot but wonder why, even in our cool moments, you lose your temper whenever I begin to talk of your marriage. I as your brother and guardian, am bound to marry you to a good husband, and as far as I have tried, I cannot see better one among our relations than Mr. Nathan. You see, he has a large fortune besides being a lawyer like me. He excels others of our community in personal accomplishment,

as well. What more do you want? He is such a prominent figure among our people that to marry him is not only a blessing to you, but a pride to me. I am sure he will treat you as his idol, adorn you with diamonds and pour his wealth at thy feet. Make up your mind and don't fail to take time by the forelock. If you lose this chance you are sure to regret it throughout your life.

Saraswati: Brother, don't be offended if I use harsh words in my anger, I am younger than you and may be liable to utter something which may not altogether pleasing to you. In that case, I have the right to be excused by my elder. I don't deny the excellent qualities you attribute to the gentleman. He may be a millionaire and also the best accomplished in our community. He may worship me like an idol. But...

Balan (*interrupting*): He is a lawyer too.

Saraswati: Yes, he is. I don't grudge him the degree given by a mighty university. But that doesn't mean a lawyer should recommend another of the same profession. You talk of his treating me as an idol. I have a husband – kindly excuse me – I require a husband who will treat me like a human being and never as an idol. Idols can be pleased by diamonds, but human beings are not. Girls there may be who can sell themselves literally and figuratively to diamonds or gold, but I do not belong to that fraternity of marketable commodity.

Balan: Sister, you have of late, cultivated a philosophic temperament, and always seem to be ruminating on something whenever you are not engaged in your study (*so saying Balan takes a note book from her and turns over the pages, in a careless manner*)

Saraswati (*perturbed*): Please give it here. That is my friend's notebook (*snatches up the note book in haste*).

(*A piece of paper and a card-like thing fall from the note book. Balan takes them at once, and makes a hasty perusal of both. Then with a furious look stares at her.*)

Balan (*enraged*): Who is this wretch? (throws the picture at her face) *Abdul Kareem!* Nonsense! A Brahmin girl receiving love letters from a Muhammedan! Most sacrilegious! And you have signed your name under his photograph! Shame upon you! Let the curse of the Rishis pour down upon your sinful head. Now I see the reason for your philosophy. I am not a fool to let you go anyway you like and bring

down shame upon a reputed family. I shall give you a week's time to mend or *end* yourself. Do you understand?

Saraswati (*brushing the beads of tears and with a face gleaming with blush*) Kindly bear with me, brother. I don't feel for the discovery of the truth; but what has really stirred me is the unexpected manner of it. Time there was when I thought it better to inform it myself. But my modesty prevented it. And the natural shyness of my sex stood on my way. Now I am paying the penalty. And I don't know what more is in store for me. But anyhow I am prepared.

Balan: Absurd! Prepared! For what? Prepare to hang yourself or change yourself. That devil of your classmate, you think, is better than a rich lawyer! Foolish! Are you mad? Whilst I am arranging for your marriage amidst many difficulties, where's the fun of your making love to a Non-Hindu? Explain your action or, you, you... damn't. I don't mind doing it.

Saraswati (*composedly, taking her brother's hands in hers*): Cool yourself, brother. I shall explain my action. My marriage, you say, is being arranged by you. Marriage, my dear brother, is not a thing of arrangement. It is not a question of haggling and bargaining. It is not a business transaction to be settled by others who are no parties to it. As a function or a celebration which is secondary and purely conventional, it may involve a third person or persons. But as a contract marriage is the culmination of the bond of love existing between two parties. It is not easily breakable, for a marriage in the true sense of the term, bends but never breaks. Marriage is purely personal, and never complementary. It is solely and wholly left to the liberty of the individual, and wherever that liberty is tampered with, the result is an unhappy union. It is a surprise to me how a learned lawyer like you can think of ruining a girl's life by tearing the roots of her love. I implore you, dear brother.

Balan (*rising up to go*): Tush! Nothing of your Nonsense! A week's time. Remember that. Take care! Don't rush into danger with your eyes open. (*goes away*)

(*A week passes by, and Balan receives the following telegram at his father-in-law's house: "Abdul Kareem Saraswati married under Self-respect methods – Ramasami)*

- *Revolt*, 6 October 1929

Notes to 2.1

1. S.Guruswami was in a fact a member of an upper non-Brahmin caste, known as the Vellalas, whose male members often took the title, 'Mudaliyar'. Kunjitham belonged to the Devadasi community, which took to referring to itself as the 'Isai-Vellala' community.

2.2 Widows and Widowhood

Appalling Figures

We give the following figures of the number of widows in India and the Madras Presidency according to the census of 1921. Let orthodoxy ponder over them, and say whether any religion has wrought such great havoc in any country.

No. of Widows in India (under 20 years)

1 Year	-	197
1-2	-	494
2-3	-	1257
3-4	-	2837
4-5	-	6707
5-10	-	85037
10-15	-	232147
15-20	-	17420820
Total		17,749,796

No. of Widows in the Madras Presidency.

Women population	-	19,246,104
Total No. of widows	-	3,713,695
Widows under 30 years.		
1-5 Years	-	1211
5-10 years	-	5692
10-15	-	22337
15-20	-	54699
20-25	-	142267
25-30	-	202651
Total	428,757	

- *Revolt*, 8 May 1929

Widow-remarriage at Erode

Mr. E. V. Ramaswami's bungalow at Erode was the scene of a happy widow marriage on the 25th July. The contracting parties were Mr. Gopalakrishna Ayer of Dharapuram taluq and Srimati Lakshmiammal, a Brahmin widow of Cochin aged about 22. The function was presided over by Mr. E. N. Venkataperumal Naidu, Retired Tahsildar and the marriage was conducted eliminating all ceremonial rites. Some of those present spoke on the necessity of widow re-marriage, and blessed the couple for their bold step. The president appealed to the younger generations to encourage such widow remarriages with a view to relieve the young widows from their life-long misery

- *Revolt*, 4 August 1929

Widows and Widowers

(By Miss Indrani)

In a very interesting and humourous speech delivered by Srimathi Ramamirtha Ammal before a crowded and enlightened audience of ladies and gentlemen at the Tinnevelly Self-respect Conference, that delightful speaker observed that unless legislation is undertaken to place widowers on a footing of equality with widows in all social, religious, legal and moral conventions, orthodox Hindus will be blind to the fate of their widows. Things will mend, only, if what is happening to the Hindu widow is going to happen to the widower in just the same measure.

A *tali* will have to be tied round the neck of the man as well and removed when he loses his spouse. If the widow is to have her hair shorn off, so must the widower. A white cloth, for both. Meeting a widower brings as much ill-luck as meeting a widow. If it is "Moonadai" (*derogatory term for widow – editors*); it is "Moondan" (*a neologism for widower – editors*). If it is no amusements, no ornaments for the widows, similarly for the widower. If *Sati* is to be performed by the widow, the widower also must be getting ready. The very presence of the widower is an ill-omen. All by legislative enactment – the preamble to which will be: "What is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose."

At any rate, this ambitious programme is seemingly worked out with commendable success in the case of widowers in South America. We

read from Frazer's "Golden Bough", the highest authority on Folk Lore:-

"In the Mekeo district of British News Guinea, a widower loses all his civil rights and becomes a social outcast, an object of fear and horror, shunned by all. He may not cultivate a garden or show himself in public nor traverse the village nor walk on the roads and paths. Like a wild beast, he must skulk in the long grass and the bushes and if he sees or anyone coming, especially a woman, he must hide behind a tree or a thicket. If he wishes to fish or hunt, he must do it alone and at night. If he would consult anyone, even the missionary he does so by stealth and at night; he seems to have lost his voice and speaks only in whispers. Were he to join a party of fishers or hunters, his presence would bring misfortune on them; the ghost of his dead wife would frighten away the fish or the game. He goes about everywhere and at all times armed with a tomahawk to defend himself, not only against wild boars in the jungle, but against the dreaded spirit of his departed spouse, who would do him an ill-turn if she could."

Why not send our orthodox brethren for a course of training in Mekeo district in British New Guinea, before any legislation is attempted? It may do some good. We will wait and see.

- *Revolt*, 22 September 1929

Widow Re-marriage

Mr. K. Punniah's Lecture

Mr. K. Punniah, editor of the Sind Observer, delivered an interesting lecture on "Widow Remarriage" at the Arya Samaj Mandir (Sushila Bhawan). He started with the fight for widow remarriage reform waged by the late Ishwar Chandar Vidyasagar of Bengal who being an "ocean of knowledge" and having mastered the Vedas and the Shastras, laboured ceaselessly and found out many authorities from the religious books for permitting marriage of widows willing to remarry. He narrated the story as to how Ishwar Chandar had been moved by his mother appealing to him to do something for widow marriage reform by taking before her son a 3 or 4 years old widow.

The lecturer described at some length the miserable and most pitiable conditions of living for widows in the days of Ishwar Chandar about 40 to 50 years ago and also those prevalent now in his native province

of Andhra and some other provinces.

The speaker next referred to the laudable work of Rai Bahadur Viressalagam, an Andhra Pandit and reformer who influenced the speaker and several other young men like him 27 years ago. The speaker referring to himself narrated how while studying in the Matriculation class and living with his sister, he went to attend a widow marriage and how after his return from that widow marriage his own brother-in-law refused to permit him to stay with him and how he was starved and eventually retaken into the family on making penance by even having his head shaved. From that day onwards the speaker made up his mind to do his level best for ameliorating the condition of widows.

Mr. Punniah next gave his emphatic opinion that whether shastric injunctions operated in the good old days ought not to be binding in the present generation in view of that changed circumstances. He said if the Shastras laid down anything which was against anybody's conscience or even against reason it was not binding on him. They of the new generation must have their own Shastras to guide them in their daily conduct.

The lecturer next referred to the offensive conduct of some orthodox Sanatani Hindus at the Khalikina Hall on the occasion of speeches favouring widow marriage and said it was shameful that these so called Sanatanis should forcibly deprive any people, of the right of giving free expression to their view. In this connection he advised the audience to "dethrone superstition and install reason."

"Woman must be given equal treatment," continued the lecturer. "It is only when woman in India is given an equal place with man that India can hope to be free from the foreigners' bondage." If a man was permitted to marry as many times as he liked he could not understand that logic which put a ban on a woman marrying after the death of her first husband. It was the duty of the reformers to see that girls and boys were both married after they attained the age of discretion. They must help in the eradication of all degrading social customs and practices.

It was the speaker's emphatic opinion that unless the Hindu widows numbering 8 millions of marriageable age were allowed to enjoy the blessings of married life the Hindu race will bring about its own ruin. The Hindus' injustice to their widows was bound, sooner or latter, to react on them if no immediate steps were taken to raise these fallen

and suppressed and oppressed creatures of God from their state of serfdom and given an honourable place in the family.

Now-a-days there was cry of immorality all round. Widow marriage was bound to result in a better purity. The speaker placed before the audience a recent instance published in newspapers of a Hindu widow of Andhra, who had left her home and married a Muslim cart man who was the first man she met after leaving her village on account of cruel treatment at the hands of her kith and kin. The papers were also full of tragic occurrences the result of immoral conduct on the part of widows forcibly deprived of the pleasures of the grihista ashram (*conjugal and family life – editors*). There was nothing to be wondered at. The circumstances were wholly changed and it was their duty to move with the times and adapt themselves to the changing conditions of life.

The lecturer in conclusion, appealed justice for the Hindu widows; otherwise by continuing injustice to these suppressed and oppressed creatures the Hindu race will perish.

- The Widows' Cause

- *Revolt*, 13th October 1929

Widow's Paradise Regained

A Short Story

(By Mr. Kritivas)

It was about six in the evening. The cloudy November sky of Madras entrapped in its bosom, the sickle shaped moon who was peeping from within as a damsel in purdha. The sea was a picture of peace in spite if her perennial music.

Overlooking the beach was the lonely room, partially visible in the dim twilight.

An artistic untidiness. A table strewn over with books, a corner giving place for charkitis (sic), sheets of newspapers decorating the floor, a jasmine creeper peeping out through the window, a woman or a mere dream reeling (sic) on a sofa, all these marked a superb carelessness of the inhabitant of that lonely abode. The dim moonlight lit the face of Kalyani. Just a youth of twenty, charmingly sweet was the expression in her eyes. The deep attractive eyes showed an anxiety for a mute tale to tell. I don't know if the makers of poems will concede beauty to Kalyani, for she possessed not a skin of golden hue, black, waterladen clouds of flowing tresses, the rainbow of an eyebrow, streak of lightning taking human shape. But if true beauty is ultimately spiritual beauty, the expression of the force of will, of poetic activity and all that go to make up an aggressive free personality, certainly she was beautiful!.

Kalyani was careless in her dress. The exuberant hair on her forehead was assorted into a bundle and was impatient to break the bondage. Her face was as pale as the moon that lay encased amidst the hanging clouds. She was attired in a light crimson saree, the dress of the evening sky. The sun was wending his way towards the west and the crimson colours of the heavens were also marching westward, in quest of their lord, the sun. Was Kalyani also in expectations?

Just at this moment Sharada entered Kalyani's room. She was wondering as to what had happened to her friend and relation whom she used to accept as the "maker of dreams" a busybody busily doing nothing whose wont it was to waste mornings on fisher girls in slums and the evenings on the Charka. But the room is open! She must be inside, she thought.

Sharada entered the room switiching the electric light on as she entered;

Kalyani was reclining on the sofa and held in her hand a letter paper. "Well, you maker of dreams! I suppose the poor Charka is enjoying a holiday that it richly deserves" ejaculated Sharada.

Sharada was a relative of Kalyani. They were bosom friends, but they were put in different casts. The former was jovial, the latter melancholy. Sharada liked to flit about in colours, make calculations of her husband's return from 'Home'– I mean England – mug up formulae of Chemistry, study notes on Shakespeare and laugh and laugh. Kalyani was fond of the destitute, was made up of the stuff of poetry that kindles pain in her soul. That was why the Charka appealed to her, the eternal musician who sings the woes of an exploited nation. Despondency was lit large on her face, her soul quaked in communion with other's sorrows.

Kalyani was as if startled from her meditations, stood up and restraining a deep sigh carefully and lending her hands to the intruder, showed a chair for her to sit.

"You are welcome Sharada", she said, "Poor Charka is enjoying rest after all."

"Then, are you free to have a stroll in the beach with me" asked Sharada.

"Please excuse me" answered Kalyani. Sharada got irritated and said, "What is the matter with you Kalyani? Don't like this self-torture of yours. It is really silly of you to boast of service to the downtrodden, while you carry an infectious sorrow with you. The Charka at least used to be a poor excuse for your evading my company. What is it, you do now? Can't you at least coax yourself into joy, to please a compatriot?"

"Sister dear, how can you expect joy of one like me? "Shastras" said Kalyani smiling, "ordain that when a women loses her husband, she must starve, she must emaciate herself, pray, prey upon herself and weep. Why, a widow cannot even weep to her heart's content lest she should infect others with her sorrow. She is at liberty to weep only during nights, moisten her eyes, moisten the bare ground on which she is expected to sleep and hide the sorrow of her race behind a beguiling smile during all day."

"I don't want to hear your satires" said Sharada, pleased with her companion's smile, "I am happy dear Kalyani, to find the change in you. You have discarded Charkha, the philosophy of despair and the white saree, the emblem of sorrow."

"There you are, my sister" spoke Kalyani in a spirit of approval, "You

have understood my sentiments only too well. But, then, dear Sharada, you are the protagonist of the Shastras of our country, the messenger of light to the world. Will you enlighten me as to why the omnipotent Shastras that forbid widow remarriage do not kill the soul of the woman the instance the husband dies?"

"It is an awkward question, my friend", answered Sharada burning with rage. "You are fast growing into an agnostic nowadays. Faith is a good thing, even for the faithless. It ensures peace, and peace paves the way for joy. All your mental freaks of service, humanity, naturalism are the manifestations of the same illness, no doubt. Savitri and Damayanti, Sita and Indumati, these are the divine inspirations of the human race? Don't you think so, Kalyani?"

"But this is not an answer to my question", said Kalyani laughing over her companion's rage, "Let us leave shastras and puranas alone. Now, answer, are you getting Collegiate education in English?"

"Yes."

"Your husband is in England and is perhaps eating meat, drinking intoxicants, cropping his jutta and neglecting his holy thread?"

"Yes. What if? I quite understand your insinuations. But what has that to do with a belief in the Shastras, belief in the holy precepts of the Rishis? If education is capable of enlightening you, ennobling you, in strengthening your old ideals, in interpreting your Shastras to you in all its oriental splendour, I don't care if the education is English or Parsi, whether you are in England or in India."

"I don't want to worry you, sister", answered Kalyani, "But I have quite quixotic views of my own on education if you are pleased to call it so. To me, education is the craving of the soul, it is neither oriental nor occidental. It is a mystical force which creates and not copies. True education implants in the human soul a mystical yearning for perfection which in the course of evolution has raised impulse to become passion, and passion to become love and which should incessantly strive to raise love to ever greater love. Any way, education is not boot polish to be used for polishing old shoes, intended to be exhibited in International Exhibitions as Indian Curiosities."

"I don't understand what all you mean", exclaimed Sharada disgusted. "Come along, let us go for a short walk on the sands, it is already 6.30 and the moon is up."

"Sorry sister, how happy I shall be to oblige! I have got an appointment with a young friend and colleague of mine. Please excuse me."

With the exchange of usual greetings, both the friends departed. The appointed time was 7 o'clock. The half an hour intervening was hanging heavily about her. The prosaic letter of her friend was lying lifeless on the sofa. She took it twenty times and looked into it again and again. The letter was absolutely prosaic, a mere announcement of an impending visit of old friends, pilgrims in the path of service. Gopal, for that was the name of the youth, came of poor Non-brahmin parents. His school life was bright but he wrecked his career by joining the Non-cooperation movement. His friends used to admire him for his love of adventure but his uncompromising critics would say that he was fickle, good for nothing. Adherence to Mahatma Gandhi would have won for him laurels; for Non-cooperation on the cross is an 'ism' to be worshipped even though it might have been called madness, in its days of potency. He was caught in the trap of the Lahore organization, the Society for breaking castes and creeds. He began to fall in love with the World Messiah, Krishnaji's teachings. It was a wrong thing for the poor fellow to do. Instead of the love for the world teacher, the love of his teachings are a bombshell to societies, time honoured traditions, gods and prophets. He has had his reward. The blasphemy of prophets led him into jail at Lahore. He is now a jail bird at large and after two years he was returning to Madras. He could inflict himself only upon Kalyani, the woman of silent sorrows, the goddess of the oppressed. His friends used to taunt him saying that he might try at widow marriage which they used to humorously call 'experimented' marriage. But Gopal used to tire them out by his silence. His friends would taunt him the other way saying "You are a Buddah Dev an ascetic". But all the while a thought, rather a dream lurked in his bosom. "Yes I shall marry Kalyani!" "No, She is a typical Brahmin by birth. Impossible!"

"What a fallen man am I", he would think at last. "Marriage is a fall, even as birth is a fall. I must be, no I will be a celibate to the end of my life."

A feeling of incompleteness, a striving for perfection was raging like a storm inside his bosom. A burning ray of all that evening sunshine entered his bosom, opened the petals of his heart, quickened the heart throbs and in a minute he was on the threshold of the lowly abode of the lonely Kalyani.

Kalyani who was anxiously awaiting Gopal's coming home, darted like an arrow and began to caress the jasmine creeper. She was intently observing the only jasmine blossom as an eager botanist. Why this uncommon timidity! She was singing, the song of hope,

There is nothing on earth like the times of waiting,

The day's spring time, the days of blossoming.

Gopal was smitten as it were by an unknown hand but regaining self-control accosted, "Kalyani, are you in a moonshine reverie?"

With a wild yet so sweet a disturbance of the heart she exclaimed, "Gopal, the jailbird is welcome to his roost!"

Both had a hearty laughter after this practical joke and Kalyani asked him as to the circumstances that led to his incarceration.

"For speaking the truth", he exclaimed, "Last time it was the wrath of imperialism; this time it was the fury of Brahminism."

"May I know the specific charge laid at your door?" She asked.

"In one of my lectures I denounced Parasara and Manu, the prophets of benighted Hinduism, the holy writ that sanctions coercive marriage and prostitution and that was enough to damn you for blasphemy. They may not be our prophets but even a devil is a prophet if he has got followers" said Gopal winding up personal talks. "It is surprising you have discarded your white saree, Kalyani."

"Why is the sky attired in crimson?" accosted Kalyani, laughing.

"But you seem to love the white jasmine blossom. She is not crimson."

"Mother nature has dressed her white lest her lover the bee should miss her in the darkness of night" remarked Kalyani poetically.

"Jasmine's beauty is a passing show. With the advent of the sun it withers. The sun is perhaps a violent lover, the oriental Raja who wants to conquer the beloved by sheer force" said Gopal.

"It is true, Gopal! Love withers under constraint. Its very essence is liberty" spoke Kalyani.

"But why all this poesy? Human life is prose, string of woes. The human flower is destined ever to wither away, never to blossom forth and fill the world with its fragrance."

"Gopal, why are you standing? Please sit on the sofa" entreated Kalyani.

"What of you?" accosted Gopal.

"But, Gopal!" said Kalyani emotionally. "A poet says that love blossoms only in the duplex life of two allied souls, which together strive upwards."

"The love you speak of knows no fetters", said Gopal.

"It neither knows darkness when there is the moon to light the path" answered Kalyani.

"Do you mean what you say?" asked Gopal eagerly.

Kalyani's eyes moist with tears and overpowered with a spiritual passion, for oneness and service, she darted upon the sofa and in a twinkling of an eye both Gopal and Kalyani, once mere friends and pilgrims in the path of service were in each other's arms ready to be pilgrims on the path of higher life as well.

- *Revolt*, 17 November 1929

2.3 Birth Control

Poverty and Birth Control

(By B.G.)

The need for birth control especially in a country like India, is an accepted factor and what is wanted now is a vigorous propaganda among the masses on the healthier ways and means reducing of birth.

Of all the evils which oppress mankind, poverty is said to be the most appalling. Pestilences last their appointed season, and then leave us, but poverty the grim tyrant of our race, abides with us through all ages and in all circumstances. For every victim that war and pestilence have slain, poverty has slain millions and not slain alone, but first condemned them to drag through a life of bondage and degradation. An eminent western writer, writing on the conditions of Indian workers, says: the want of food and of leisure everywhere is plunging the great race in an abyss of misery and degradation. It is this universal prevalence and constant continuance of poverty, which have in a great measure accustomed men to its evils and prevented them from their sufficiently feeling or having any hope of even escaping them. Unacquainted with its causes, man thinks it an absolutely inevitable evil."

Life of the working classes is worse than that of the beasts of burden. They toil unremittingly for ten or twelve hours a day at a laborious, monotonous and in many cases a deadly occupation and without any hope of advancement of personal interest in the success of the work they are engaged in. At night these jaded ponies are too tired to permit their enjoyment of the few leisure hours, and the morn wakens them to the same dreary day of ceaseless toil. Thus have the poor to toil on as long as their strength permits. At last some organ gives way, the legs, the eyes, or the hands and the unfortunate sufferer is thrown out of work and sent to the hospital, while his wife and family are reduced to the brink of starvation. Often the man rendered desperate by his hopeless position, plunges into drink and gives himself over to ruin. The cause for this state of affairs is said to be the constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it.

Plants and animals, both of them are impelled by a powerful instinct to increase their species and this instinct is not interrupted by any difficulty

in providing for their off springs. By the law of nature which makes food necessary for the life of man, it can never actually increase beyond the lowest nourishment capable of supporting him. Hence a strong check on population such as by celibacy, sterility, and premature death must be in operation. Checks on population are said to be of three kinds, viz "moral restraint, vice and misery" Moral restraint, that is sexual abstinence is the only remedy for poverty and their evil effects (other remedies having been condemned as vices leading to misery). It is natural that every individual exercises his or her sexual functions during the period of sexual instinct. But abstinence and excess should both be avoided. Therefore it is the duty of every individual towards himself, society and the country, whatever be his or her station in life, to bring into the world only a very small number of children.

But here again the religion is responsible. The ordinance of Manu says, "By his son a man obtains victory over all people; by his son's son he enjoys immortality and afterwards by the son of his grandson he reaches the solar abode." Thus child birth in India being considered as a religious duty, preventive checks operate little. And the result is an overwhelming population over and above the supply of food materials, which consequently results in excessive poverty and the multiplication of beggars in millions. Efficient methods of birth control are the only means to save the situation. It will be a great service to the country if the so called patriots take this matter in all seriousness and include this in their national programme.

- *Revolt*, 22 May 1929

Birth-Control

(Viswanath)

It is all to the good that serious minded social reformers in India have begun of late to devote increasing attention to the authorities and the leaders of public opinion alike to think of ways and means for putting down some of the gravest evils that beset society in consequence of the unfettered production of congenital weaklings and incompetents in the land. These weaklings and incompetents are not only a drag on the race, they also represent an enormous amount of avoidable wastage of national wealth and virility. In fact to all social workers engaged in the task of removing poverty and disease from amongst the masses, the one thing that strikes as the easiest and the most practicable way out is

the provision of adequate facilities for the education of the community at large in the methods of limiting families without imposing restraints of a too irksome or exacting character. As it is, both among the lower and the middle classes, there is an abnormal amount of child births taking place, leading up to appalling figures of infantile and maternal mortality.

It is a truism to say that none but infants born at fairly long intervals of healthy parents can survive the stress and strain of the first days of existence; it is equally true that mothers with whom pregnancies and deliveries are annual events can never hope to be anything other than liabilities to fathers and society. Not only would the nerve, grit and ability so necessary for bringing up their children on right lines be wanting in them, they would themselves be unable to render any useful service to any cause worth the name. It is in the very best interest of the nation, therefore, that the people should be educated in ways which would enable them to exercise control in the matter of the number of children they desire to have. It is certainly not an advantage, even from the individual's point of view, to have children disproportionate to capacity and means for sustaining them and bringing them up in a fashion suited to the needs and circumstances of the times.

But it has been contended that all this could be achieved by judicious self restraint on the part of the sexes. This was the view propounded by the clergy in western countries when the freethinkers agitated years ago for state support to the cause of scientific birth control; and this we believe is the view of Mr. Gandhi and men of his way of thinking in this country. They contend that, if only men would put a curb on their passions and abstain from conjugal felicities except on occasions when they feel the yearning for a new bond to bind the home more firmly to their hearts, there would be no call for the aid of the apostles of birth-control. It is their opinion further that all talk of birth-control is immoral and ungodly, and that danger and sinfulness alone would result from its widespread preaching and practice.

For ourselves we fail to see the soundness of any of these contentions. In the first place, human nature being what it is, the plea for abstention is, to say the least of it impracticable, it will not appeal to the average man of healthy appetites and among the appetites, it should be remembered there is none more compelling in its urge and insistent in its craving than the one relating to the sex. Nor is it advisable from

the point of view of health and morality that abstention for prolonged periods should be adopted by adults. Starvation of any of the instincts such as of hunger, thirst or sex must necessarily produce unpleasant and adverse reactions on health and enforced abstention in the case of married people whatever be the motive will inevitably lead to estrangement and unhappiness. If it is the essence of marriage, therefore that the couple should live in amity, concord, and mutual happiness the compulsion of abstention upon them could only have the disastrous effect of destroying it for ever.

It may be that there are some people in the world with whom sex appetite is at a low ebb at all times, but it is not to them that the helpful suggestions of the advocates of birth-control are addressed. These people whom we may, without meaning any offence, include in the category of the 'sexless' generally remain celibates for life and the world is none the worse for it. But average men with normal instincts and cravings cannot be expected to desist from indulgence on all but occasions when they desire children, and to them the means and measures suggested by the students of birth-control must be made known and the sooner the better.

It is equally incorrect to say that morality would be jeopardized if the devices of birth control are placed within the reach of one and all. It is an old exploded doctrine that right conduct could be brought about among the people only by exciting their fears and playing upon their ignorance and credulity. We have in fact fully outlived the era when humanity could be persuaded to right and rational conduct only by painting in horrid colours the picture of the consequences otherwise. Reason and judgment have come to be the sole basis of action and activity, and it is futile to hope that a morality of the right type could be evolved and maintained in an atmosphere of ignorance and superstition. Education represents light, not in a figurative but in a literal sense as well and its diffusion can only lead to the elimination of darkness, and not to its intensification. Moralists would do well, therefore, to alter their conceptions of the world, and not bank upon ignorance as the prop of their philosophy and the pillar of their faith.

The particular fear expressed in this connection namely, that the doctrines of the birth control advocates would tend to promote promiscuous relations has been well answered by that sincere and earnest exponent of birth control, Dr. Marie Stopes and the passage is well worth quoting: "Some who would otherwise welcomes the spread

of knowledge on this important subject" says she, "fear an increase of promiscuous relations as the result. It appears, however that the type of person who desires to lead an irregular life has long had access to sufficient information to satisfy such requirements, while the virtuous mother has been helpless in her ignorance of how to control her motherhood in the interests of her children. Daily experience in the birth control clinics bears this out in a convincing manner. Hundreds of worn out and wretched overburdened mothers have applied for the help given by knowledge, but not a couple of flighty young people. The latter can get crude information from their companions". These words are as true of conditions in India as in England, and we do not think we need labour the point any further.

In this connection it is worthwhile remembering that a shrewd observer and patriot of the type of Rabindranath Tagore has already lent his weight to the propaganda of the birth-control advocates; and we may be sure that, though for the moment the latter are not making much headway as was evidenced by the defeat of a resolution moved in the Bombay Corporation the other day recommending the provision of adequate facilities for instruction and advice in regard to this subject in the City of Bombay – the question will become a live issue before long, clamouring for a solution on exactly the same lines as have been adopted by several advanced countries in the West.

- *Revolt*, 14 July 1929

The Orient and Birth Control

A. F. Clark

If there is any one thing that the Orient teaches more plainly than another, it is that birth control is essential to human progress and happiness. India and China are today not *arguments* in favour of this rational principle, they are the *living answer* to it. One must be blind indeed who can visit these countries and not become a convert to birth control if he is not already one. Here is plainly seen an over production in human flesh that is appalling to behold. Roughly, half the population of the earth is represented in these two countries, a flood of humanity so far in excess of the resources of the land, as to force there humans down to the living level of their beasts.

These vast populations are absolutely and inevitably lost to human progress. The advancement of civilization cannot touch them. Mr.

Gandhi is right when he says that modern implements of civilization should be kept out of his country. The introduction and use of modern labor saving machinery in a civilization living in biblical times would mean starvation to countless numbers of persons. Caste, that deplorable social system that keeps a man all his life what he was born, is the inevitable result of lack of birth control. You must be what you are and no more. To do more than your allotted portion of work, *all your life* would mean that another or others would starve to death for lack of employment. Caste to the majority of unfortunates living under this social systems, means slavery; half the world enslaved largely because of its neglect of a simple principle and yet in the face of this unanswerable example the Christian church is bitterly opposed to birth control! It would see its own civilization go the way of these, rather than acknowledge a right and lend aid in support of a principle that is contrary to the teachings of their holy book. It would squander its men and money in a vain attempt to place its own imaginary God in the heads of these unfortunates in place of their own rather than lend aid to starving millions.

Birth control the church says, is non-Christian in spirit and principle and therefore is wrong. It places man as master of his own reproduction instead of a biblical god. For this reason it is a sin. Preventive measures would lead to promiscuous intercourse, therefore this is commercial. All of which is drowned in a cry of misery arising from the too many that have been born and must live their lives to the bitter end, that the many might suffer in place of a lesser number that could have shared in the blessings of this earth. Yet birth control for *increasing* as well as *lessening* the number born, is a national problem and a state problem and a family problem. And the nation and the state and the family that face this problem squarely in a materialistic manner, as it should be faced ,will be happier in the end.

***Revolt*, 29 September 1929**

A New Movement in England

The third International Congress for Sexual Reform has convened in London. This commendable body is under the guidance and supervision of such notables as Mrs. Bertrand Russell, Havelock Ellis, Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Aldous Huxley. Many delegates from the various nations are reported to be in attendance.

Dr. Norman Haire, one of the leading British authorities on rejuvenation, and a member of the organization, declared its chief aim was "to establish sexual ethics and sociology on a scientific biological and psychological basis instead of the present theological basis. There must be no conflict between the laws of nature and ethics, between pure truth and pure purity." Mrs. Russell assured the delegates that the League for sexual Reform had no intention of taking an apologetic attitude and would not hesitate to say the old notions of morality were wrong from top to bottom and to go on with the long, hard task of convincing magistrates, lawmakers and many reactionary physicians that they must contribute to human happiness by abandoning the outworn Biblical codes governing sex and marriage relations.

Letters of endorsement and sympathy were read at the meeting from Margaret Sanger, Havelock Ellis, who was too ill to attend, and from Judge Ben B. Lindsay. The latter wrote: "There are 10,000,000 young men in the United States between 20 and 30 years old. Only 4,000,000 of them are married, but the church and the state unite in demanding that the other 6,000,000 be continent. Are they?"

The aim of the league is good. The Bible, the Sunday school, and the pulpit are not proper sources. What humanity needs in this connection is a morality based upon the principles of reason and science. And in so far as this league gives evidence of promoting such a morality, it should receive encouragement and sympathy.

- *The Truth Seeker*

- *Revolt,* 3 November 1929

3 DEBATING RIGHTS: LAW AND THE WOMEN'S QUESTION

3.1 The Case for Hindu Law Reform

Women's Rights in Hindu Law

Mr. Jayakar said in the course of his presidential address to the 41 session of the Indian National Social Conference held at Calcutta on the 25th December last:-

If the law had stood where the *Mitakshara* (*ancient and influential treatise on the Hindu law of inheritance– editors)* had molded it, or even if it had been allowed to develop on the progressive lines of interpretation adopted by the later Maratha author of the *Vyavahara Mayukha* (*a 17th century law digest whose rulings prevailed in western India – editors*), there would have been no trouble at all. But in course of time rival schools arose, and especially in the earlier stages of their decisions, the Privy Council, sitting at Westminster and naturally struggling under a misconception of the historic and other antecedents of the Indian people, have unconsciously played in the hands or orthodoxy. The Englishman was not accustomed until the eighties to regard women in his own country as independently capable of acquiring or holding property. English women got this right at a very late stage. With this bias in his mind, it is not surprising that the English judge at Westminster, in interpreting ancient Indian texts written in a language which he did not understand and of the context of which too he was personally ignorant, adopted a position inclining more towards limited female rights than towards absolute ones.

In a celebrated ruling which laid down for all time that inheritance derived by women from a male in their husband's families can never become their absolute property, the Privy Council, being solely dependent upon confusing rival quotations cited on opposite sides, have actually abrogated the *Mitakshara* rule in favor of more ancient and doubtful texts vaguely prescribing an ascetic life for Hindu widows. The bias thus acquired by judicial decisions has unconsciously survived to the present day. The English judge in England and in India, owing to his natural caution born of his ignorance of the language and the

habits of the people, has fought shy of liberal interpretations except when compelled by the clearest evidence. The whole administration has been, so far as Hindu Law is concerned, as grievously unnatural as if Japanese judges sat at Westminster in 1928 giving rulings on the domestic laws of Englishmen from Japanese translations of Bracton or Coke or Lyttleton *(authors of standard texts on law in England – editors)*, unconcerned with the mighty social changes which had taken place in English society since those times of which they had no conception owing to their isolation.

It is not my intention to blame individuals, but to condemn the system under which they are working. The result is that Hindu Law which has a very large resilience and power of adaptability has remained unresponsive to the requirements of the times in the British period. The adaptability of the Hindu Law is surprising to those who study it from this point of view. Whenever an Indian judge of learning, insight, sympathy and knowledge has had the chance of interpreting the ancient texts, he has tried his best to bring them into accord with the growing requirements of modern society. Sir Lallubhai Shah's ruling on the validity of *anuloma* marriages (*a marriage in which a man of a 'higher' varna marries a woman of a 'lower' varna – editors*) can be cited as one instance. Occasionally a gifted English judge, whose natural vision of imagination has enabled him to see clearly through the darkness of texts and quotations has lighted on a true rule, but in such cases its effect has been nullified by his over-cautions colleagues or successors. The result is that to-day there are a large number of anomalies waiting to be set right. To depend upon judicial interpretation for doing this work would take centuries. It is necessary, therefore that legislation should take a hand in this work or reform.

It is most urgently needed to-day in improving the position of the widow in a Hindu joint family. When the husband dies undivided, we are all aware of her miserable lot. She cannot get her husband's share if she is without male issue. The rules under which maintenance is decreed to her are unjust. They all lean in favour of her husband's coparceners. A vague sort of feeling that a Hindu widow must be an ascetic before her age and inclinations make it possible, has restrained British Indian judges from interpreting the law in a plain natural and modern sense. Her rights of adoption have been curtailed and the beneficence of an important ruling of the Privy Council in that behalf has been limited in some Provinces on the principle of *stare decisis.* There is (no) reason

why the wife of a separated Hindu without issue should not be allowed to take the best part of his estate. It is far more natural and human to do so than that she should enjoy a limited or life estate and on her death the whole property should pass to a *sapinda* (coparcener in the 14th remove whose existence was not even known when the husband died and in many cases not till after the widow's life terminated. The necessities of the times when this agnatic preference arose have all disappeared. Hindu males are no more the fighting asset which they once were, and there is no need to favour them with preferential rights of succession unnatural on any rational theory of life. Yet the peculiar rule continues and receives daily interpretation and support.

Again, there is no reason why all over India the daughter should not take her father's estate absolutely as she does in Bombay. The artificial distinction is unknown to the *Mitakshara*, of inheritance from males and inheritance from females, nor of males in her husband's family or in her father's family. All these distinctions have reference to a period which had extraordinary social and military necessities, no longer operative in Hindu Society. The time has come when, in thorough conformity with the true spirit of Hindu Law, which is rationalism, equality and humanity, changes should be made. One such principle for the acceptance of which the *Mitakshara* struggled hard, was nearness or propinquity according to blood relationship and not according to funeral oblations. The author of that book, one of the noblest treatises known to Hindu Law, raised a storm by reversing the current of feeling and adopting a plain sensible rule of succession, viz., whoever was nearer by blood was entitled to succeed. Blood particles, he said, are the true test and not ancestors in the heavens placated by funeral balls. The time has come when the plain, natural and sensible rules of the *Mitakshara* in places supplemented by the virile common sense of the *Mayukha,* should find a permanent place on our Statute Book.

– *Revolt*, 16 January 1929

Hindu Law Research and Reform Conference, Poona (Hindu Law Must be Reformed)

The First Hindu Law Research and Reform Conference was held at the Parashuramabhau College, Poona, at the Presidentship of the Hon. Mr. Justice Madagaumkar. The following is an extract of the speech delivered by Mr. N.C. Kelkar, Chairman of the Reception Committee

(*see above pp. 393-394*):

It is needless to point out what great havoc must have been caused in the correct administration of the Hindu Law by the British Law Courts as now generally constituted. The question, therefore, arises how is this havoc to be remedied, if not through legislative measures, either forced upon or accepted by Government, by public opinion or by bills introduced by private members of competent legislative bodies. When the Legislative Assembly, for instance, consists of a majority of elected members and among them almost a fair representation of the Hindu population, it would be too hazardous to say, that such a body ought not to take cognizance of any measure of social reform or a measure affecting the Hindu Law. It would be too anachronistic or out of time to say, that the Legislative Assembly even as now constituted is absolutely incompetent to deal with the measures affecting Hindu Law and custom.

It would be a large order on nature to expose that the Hindu Law, hundreds or thousand of years old would be quite enough or suitable for all succeeding generations, present and future, and that the accumulated momentum of altered custom and usage would be permanently pent up and hermetically sealed for ever. In every progressive civilized nation, research had always doubly effected firstly, to put up ancient things in clear light and correct perspective, and secondly, to suggest ideas of reconstruction and reform along with legitimate revival.

The President's Speech

The Hon. Mr. Justice Madgaumkar, in the course of his Presidential address, said:

We all deplore the lack of progress – it might even be called degeneration from which we have been suffering from centuries. An orthodox Hindu statesman, Sir T. Madhavrao opined half a century ago that there was no society which suffered so much from self inflicted evils as Hindu society. The causes are patent: extreme conservatism, lack of perspective, reluctance to face real attempts to work round difficulties by metaphysical casuistry and legal subtleties, inability to adapt ourselves to altered environment, stubborn pride in the past with insufficient thought of present and future – all these most of us are agreed, are the root-causes. It is this which causes a large number

of us to shirk the work of reform. And it is not merely from the Shastris and Pandits but too often those least versed in our ancient laws that outcry proceeds of sacrilege and of "religion danger" whenever any proposal of reform is mooted.

Reverence is one thing; blind worship quite another. To the lawyer at least it should be plain that the laws of Manu are neither more or less sacrosanct than the law of Solomon or the Twelve Tables. In short, we recognized that the Hindus are no longer the isolated community they were in those ancient times and that now even Hindu society is not static but dynamic. Like other societies it must in course of time come forward or lag behind. We desire that it should progress. If we find our laws crystallizing and favouring the institutions which have decayed and which prevent progress, we conceive it our duty to strive to alter them in the right direction. As to the rate of progress, opinions may reasonably differ. As to the direction there need be no serious difference of opinion.

Nevertheless, the flowing tide is with us. We are realising that unless we reform ourselves, our institutions, and to some extent our laws, we shall degenerate still further and shall perish even though all the while we lay to ourselves the flattering unction that we are the most spiritual people on earth, while in reality we prove ourselves amongst the weakest and least fitted to survive in the struggle of nations. We seek reform not because we will, but because we must. I have said enough. I hope to show that while we realise the necessity for reform we do not underrate the difficulties of the task before us. Without further loss of time we must equip ourselves to carry on the work before us.

The following resolution among others was proposed by Mr. Jayakar and duly passed:

This conference resolves that the time has come for this Association to take up the work of research into Hindu Law with the view of indicating what changes are necessary in the rules of Hindu Law as at present administered so as to bring them into accord with the requirements of the modern Hindu society in such a manner as not to be in direct conflict with the true spirit of Hindu Law.

– *Revolt*, 5 June 1929

3.2 Debates on the Age of Consent and Child Marriage Restraint Bills

Marriage or Consent

Dr. Gour and Mr. Sarda are moving the legislature to liberalise the law governing the relationship of the sexes in our country. The one attempts to prevent the undue exercise of parental authority blasting the happiness of the young. The other seeks to raise the age of consent and protect womankind from being utilized by the stronger sex as the vehicle for lustful expression. Children are considered to be merely property meant to gratify the parental craving for domination. Women are but utensils intended to pander to men's sensuous proclivities. Dr. Gour's is a fight against the abuse of youth by elders for the satisfaction of the latter's possessory instinct. Mr. Sarda's is a protest against the abuse of youth for the carnal gratification of the temporarily intoxicated. Both the reformers have to struggle against ingrained elements of human nature.

Of the two, Dr. Gour's endeavour is undoubtedly by far the more serious and the more important, considering the interests at stake for the well-being of posterity. The instinct for possession is deep rooted in our being, is fortified by prevailing ideas of morality and finds expression by conscious, deliberate acts conceived in advance in all their details and carried out with determination and precision. While, on the other hand, the sensuous passion, in those inebriated cases to which the law relating to the age of consent applies, is superficial in its origin, deterred by condemnation of the popular moral code and is expressed in fitful, desultory acts conceived in haste and carried out with hesitation and in fragmentary manner. It is easier to fight a fleeting emotion than a stratified instinct. The damages wrought by the former are much less in quantum and duration than those caused by the latter. A chance injury is easily cured. But the conditions bringing about a chronic offence are ever present, involving a perpetual repetition of injuries that neither the doctor nor the lawyer can hope to counteract. The marriage law which compels a wife to sell her body to the husband in exchange for board and bed brings in incalculable harm to both the sexes. The hardships and sufferings that it creates in the life of a single married couple are not equaled by the cumulative sufferings endured

through an age of chance injuries. The Devadasi can say nay to unwelcome solicitations. The wife cannot. Mr. W. R. Thurston well observes in his booklet on *Philosophy of Marriage*:-

"The daily and nightly juxtaposition of the male and female, which is a result of present marriage laws and customs, leads to unrestrained sexual intercourse, which perverts the natural instincts of both male and female, and makes partial prostitutes of 90 percent of all married women. This condition arises from the fact that married women have been led to believe that such prostitution of them selves is right and natural because it is legal.

Our present marriage laws must be amended to conform more closely with natural laws. The marriage contract should provide that the man may have sexual intercourse with the woman only when and if she desires it."

The law of consent ought to be made to apply equally within marriage as well as outside it. If we rid our minds of the current superstition that postulates property in women, we would clearly perceive that the husband pledged to protect and safeguard the interests of his companion in life, stands in a fiduciary relation towards his wife and a violation by him of her rights deserves to be more seriously dealt with in law than an offence by a mere stranger. In the law of property this is recognized. Criminal misappropriation is the more heinous if committed by a clerk, servant or any person in a fiduciary relation regarding the property misappropriated. Theft by a police officer meets with condign punishment. But it is given to certain eminent members of the Age of Consent Committee to suggest the contrary doctrine to the large body of the witnesses appearing before that body. We publish elsewhere extracts from the remarkable evidence tendered before the committee by Miss L. Krishnabai, the Secretary of the Madras League of Youth. We commend the courage of the young lady who dared to speak out against the prevailing trend of opinion in the committee which sought to perpetuate the immoral provisions of the present law which deals leniently with the husband and drastically with the stranger.

Neither Dr. Gour nor Mr. Sarda has attempted to alter marriage and consent laws generally. Their present endeavour is restricted to the narrow sphere pertaining to the age for marriage and the age for consent. An overhauling of the law in respect of the grown-ups is also urgent and vital to national progress. Let us hope that success in the present

limited endeavour will lead to wider reforms in the future.

– *Revolt*, 26 December 1928

Youth Speaks Out

The following are extracts from the oral evidence tendered by Miss L. Krishnabai, Secretary, The League of Youth, Madras before the Age of Consent Committee on the 20th November.

Q: You do not differentiate the offence by the husband from the extra marital cases so far as the age of consent is concerned.

A: No. Because the consequences are the same.

Q: I may bring to your notice that the consequences in the case of a stranger are worse because there will be a moral depravity attached to the act, while in the case of the husband, there will be no moral depravity attached. Would you therefore not think that the age should be higher in extra marital cases than those inside marriage?

A: No.

Q: You seem to think that reform of the law of marriage is the prime necessity. That is more urgent and necessary than the fixing of the age of consent.

A. Yes.

Q: If marriages below 16 are prevented by legislation, will you accept the law of court?

A: It wouldn't be absolutely necessary but it may be accepted.

Q: Supposing there is no marriage law, would you accept the age of consent only?

A: That would be absolutely useless.

Q: If there is a marriage law of 16, then age of consent law is not necessary and standing by itself, is it useless?

A: Until public opinion reaches complete understanding the age of consent may be retained. As public opinion gets enlightened we can do away with the age of consent.

Q: You want to put the extra marital and intra marital cases on the same basis as far as age goes. What is your reason for it?

A: We do not believe that there is any difference between the two.

Q: But the consequences of the two are different. In one case a girl suffers physically while in the other she suffers morally as well as physically. She is victimized for the whole of her life. She becomes an outcaste from society.

A: We stand for higher order of society. We do not draw this difference.

Q: (Mr. S. C. Mitrai): The persons who advise a higher age for extra marital cases argue in this way: that in marital cases only physical development of the body is to be looked after while in extra marital cases physical development, understanding and mature intellect are also to be considered. But you think that no such difference is really necessary.

A: There is no meaning in such distinctions. I think I will stick to what I have said.

Q: Girls in provinces where there is the purdha system and where they are not properly educated cannot understand the consequences. When women are not allowed to exercise legal rights before 18 how do you think they can exercise power over their parents at 16?

A: This right which is more important than any other right should be exercised at 16.

- *Revolt*, 26 December 1928

Mr. Sarda's Bill

"Look here upon this picture, and on this, the counterfeit presentment of two brothers."

The Government of India has committed a breach of faith with the people of this country by siding the reactionaries in the Assembly and postponing the consideration of Mr. Sarda's Bill to prevent child marriages. Their misconduct was all the more flagrant in that they have already expressed support to Mr. Sarda's Bill and their sudden change of front has taken unawares the progressives in the Assembly and has prevented a proper marshalling of their voting strength. The problem of the age before the world, especially before the nations of the East is one of social reconstruction. Governments and peoples are today straining their every nerve to pull down systems of society which, whatever the utility in a by-gone age, are no longer applicable to the

modern conditions and serve only to hinder individual liberty and social efficiency. Turkey has launched a militant programme to attain freedom from the clutches of an old world religion and an outworn social order. Across the Indian borders, King Amanullah has squandered a kingdom in an heroic struggle with the mullas to dethrone religious supremacy. Young China has abandoned the torturing of women's feet out of shape. Everywhere in the world Governments are co-operating earnestly with enlightened attempts among the peoples for the removal of the social evils and the fashioning of the free society.

In our own country the awakening of the masses is keeping pace with the spread of modern ideas of enlightenment and progress. The movement for the securing of manly rights has caught along with lightning rapidity. But while Governments elsewhere are in the forefront of the struggle for social emancipation, the Government of India keep themselves at a safe distance from the firing line. The Government here has so far played a safe game by adopting *non possumus* attitude and guaranteeing religious neutrality. But the problem is fast assuming such proportions that the Government cannot afford any longer to keep out of the fight if they would keep themselves in living touch with the people.

The Government are certainly reading alright the sign of the times in that they express unwillingness to throw in their lot altogether with the reactionaries. They not only do not openly oppose Mr. Sarda's measure but they often express their lip sympathies with the principle of reform. But they lack the courage to undertake and pilot measures of reform which may rouse the ire or vested interest and endanger their own safety. The result is a policy of vacillation that sometimes gets shown up as was done in the case of Mr. Sarda's Bill. It is an unedifying sight to see Government members walking into the same lobby as Mr. M. K. Acharya (1) with intent to obstruct the passing of a measure to prevent child marriage. The excuse offered by Government in explanation of their strange conduct intensifies the wrong they have committed. It is said that the Government expect the report of the Age of Consent Committee before they determined on their attitude towards Sarda's Bill.

What connection there can be between the conclusions of a philosophical enquiry relating to psycho-physiological problem, as to mortgaging the happiness of children to serve their selfish purposes

on the strength of outworn Sastras, passes our understanding. The Age of Consent relates but to the inception of sexual life in an individual while marriage as interpreted by the primitive laws under which we are living, governs the entire duration not only of his sexual life but of the totality of all life in him from the date of marriage right up to death. The law relating to Consent relates to but a single act of trespass, while the law of marriage dominates a whole life time. The consequences of indiscreet consent are as nothing compared to the evils of a misalliance in wed-lock. A greater degree of maturity of intellect is therefore needed to agree to undertake the serious responsibilities of marriage than is required for giving intelligent consent to a chance relationship. The Government of India however seek to decide the question of Child Marriage on the evidence gathered regarding the Age of Consent. As well may they determine their foreign relationship – say with Afghanistan – in the light of C.I.D. reports of Mr. Shaukat Ali's (*well-known Muslim nationalist associated with the Khilafat agitation – editors*) speeches. The want of courage on the part of the Government is making them look extremely ridiculous.

- *Revolt* , 6 February 1929

Bad Logic

Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastri C.I.E., the ex-Advocate General who had a thrilling, hairbreadth escape from the Law Membership has written a learned disquisition on marriage legislation. We publish elsewhere extracts from his valuable article. As a skilful lawyer he draws conclusions just the reverse of what his data would warrant. His conclusion is "In this country the age of 12 for marriage and 14 for consummation may be the best step for the moment." Elsewhere in the article however, he admits that "16 would be suitable for the age of consent" and "21 and 18 for man and woman respectively" as the age for marriage. The latter statements are obviously made when his examination of the conditions in other countries tempt him to our application of similar measures in his own county. But the Brahmin in him resists the temptation and the lawyer in him furnishes means of escape from an awkward corner. He clutches, as every advocate of orthodoxy does, at the social evils in other countries as a weapon to be used against reformers in our own country. He dilates upon the errors and irregularities in the sexual life of other Nations and quotes with gusto Upton Sinclair who declaims against late marriage. The evils of late marriage may be true and may

hold good of certain countries with an exaggerated sex psychology. But does Mr. Venkatarama Sastri seriously contend that we in India have not had enough of the orgies of early marriage?

Upton Sinclair propounds a theory and suggests an experiment when he advises young people to get married before going off to College in order to be saved from "fussing, flirting and dancing." But Indians have before their eyes everyday the grim tragedy enacted of husband students worrying the life out of their fathers-in-law for college fees and saving money to pile up dowry money for their daughters who are already reaching marriageable age. An Upton Sinclair can afford to indulge in his fancy free, building colleges in the air, filled with sex-satiated undergraduates. But under Indian conditions, no, not even an orthodox Brahmin lawyer, should venture to tread the footsteps of writers who prescribe for a different stage of civilization.

Age of Consent and Marriage.

(By Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastri, C.I.E)

I would ask those who have to fix the age of consent to read what Havelock Ellis says in regard to it in his essay on "Immorality and the Law." I can only summarise it here as follows:-

"Preservation of chastity until adult age is established may be desirable. Sexual maturity however, is reached earlier and with it goes responsibility. At sixteen a developed human being on the sexual side, more mature than a youth of corresponding age and capable of seducing as well as being seduced, a woman cannot be protected against her consent without injustice to her partner in the act, without demoralization to herself and without confusion of the boundary between serious crime and natural though morally reprehensible act. 16 is the farthest limit to which the age of consent may be raised and wherever as in New York or New South Wales it was pushed beyond that age, no successful prosecution ever occurs and the law becomes practically inoperative as regards the age clause. An attempt at raising the age from 16 to 19 has been defeated in England by the Liberals who realized that it would introduce intolerable social conditions.

The first question is, should the age of marriage be higher than the age of consent or lower?

The surprising diversity of opinion which characterizes individuals,

characterizes countries and nations also. According to a Geneva publication on the age of marriage and the age of consent in 41 countries, it would appear that as many as 23 countries consider the responsibilities of marriage so serious that they make the minimum age of marriage higher than the age of consent, as if no serious responsibility were involved in the consent to an indecent act. The minimum age for marriage is, however, lower than the age of consent in the eight following countries: Belgium, Great Britain, Greece, India, Irish Free State, Siam, South Africa and Venezuela, and the age is the same for both in the nine countries : Austria, Haiti, Italy, Monaco, New Zealand, Spain (Civil marriage), Roumania (Bukovina), Turkey and Uruguay.

Now about the age to be fixed for the marriage. If I were asked "what do you consider to be the proper age for marriage", I should ask in return, "By proper age, do you mean that which I should commend as desirable or that which should be fixed as the age below which marriage should be prohibited?" The Answer is different according as the one or the other is the question and the considerations in each case must vary.

I should readily agree generally to commend 21 & 18 for man and woman respectively. If that is accepted by the individuals concerned, I should hope for very good results. Propaganda for making these ages of consummation the rule among the people would be very desirable. Even orthodoxy might accept 21 and 16 for consummation. But imposition of a rigorous rule by legislation is another matter. It may easily produce harm. I can conceive of cases where marriage at 18 may be desirable and wise and it admits of no question that marriage at that age involves no injury. There is no use ignoring the fact that years before 21 a young man is sexually a developed person. And if the mind is not diverted by any engrossing occupation the idea of sex cannot be kept out of the mind and might become an obsession. It will not be difficult to imagine what would happen if he were then not allowed to marry. The same may not happen to women in this country at least to the same extent. What is happening to men, and even to women in countries in which they have been completely emancipated from the regime of old ideas, is described in more than one modern book. It would seem that sex experience at 14 or even 12 is not uncommon among them. Unless one feels that no cost is too much to get rid of the depressing effect of early matrimony and its responsibilities, he cannot

contemplate with equanimity the prospect of serious irregularities and errors of life or even sexual diseases arising from postponement of marriages. Elsewhere the irregularities and their consequences have become so unbearable that it has been suggested that boys and girls should be married and then sent to colleges. Upton Sinclair says, "I very much question whether if we should apply our wisdom to the task of getting our young people happily mated before we send them off to college, we should get a lot more serious study out of them than we now do with all their fussing and flirting and dancing." It seems to me with all respect that those who suggest high ages for marriage with legislative prohibition and punishments have bestowed insufficient thought to the probable consequences of that which they commend. Nor have they cared to examine experiences of other countries.

The following facts drawn from the Geneva publication deserve attention at the hands of those who care to study this problem carefully.

The age of marriage for man and woman is 14 and 12 in Queensland, Tasmania. Victoria, Western Australia, Great Britain, Greece, Irish Free State, Italy, New Zealand, Russian Poland, Uruguay, Venezuela, eight of the United States, Phillipine Islands, and under the Spanish Civil Law.

It is 14 for both in Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Austrian Poland, Bukovina, Croatia and Slovenia.

It is 12 for both in Slovakia, Sub-Carpathian Russia and Hungary.

It is 15 for both in Turkey.

It is 16 for both in China, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is 18 and 16 in Egypt, Esthonia, Latvia and thirteen of the United States.

It is 15 and 13 among the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

It is 21 and 18 in ten of the United States. Seven of the United States have 18 and 15; five have 17 and 14; two have18 for both; two have 21 for both; one has 15 and 12 ; one has 14 and 13; one has 18 and 14.

South Africa has 12 for women with no age for men.

These are said to be the absolute minima subject to no exception. The Geneva publication says that these ages do not probably represent the actual age of marriage in countries where the age fixed is low. It is

however difficult to be sure that in counties in which 21 and above are fixed as the age for marriage, cases do not occur of marriages between 12 and 16. Upton Sinclair calls attention to the startling fact that Hopkins hospital bulletin for January 1922 brings to light that on an examination of 500 cases of delivery, where the mother was between 12 and 16, it appeared "that pregnancy and labour at these ages were no more dangerous than in older women; and that on the other hand, the duration of the labour was actually shorter and the size of the children was not inferior" and adds that he leaves the commenting to feminists and others opposed to early marriage. We may next glance at ages for marriage not absolute, i.e., subject to special permission for earlier marriages by an authority empowered to grand such permission.

These ages are 18 and 15 for Haiti, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Surinam and Curac (sic) and Roumania (old provinces).

Russian Poland, Bassarabia, Transylvania and Voivodine.

It is 21 and 18 for Iceland and Sweden.

It is 17 and 15 for Japan, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; 20 and 18 for Norway and Switzerland and 21 and 16 for Russia Poland.

- *Revolt,* 6 February 1929

The Age of Consent

Now that the recommendations of the Age of Consent Committee have been unanimously supported by its members, and submitted to the Government of India for approval, it needs no special mention that the public should extend its full support, if it should be enacted into a law. Though the full report is not published yet, from the scanty information available, we understand that the committee has recommended 14 years as the minimum marriageable age for girls, 15 years as the age of consent in marital cases and 18 in extra-marital cases. Regarding the low age of marriage, the committee observes that owing to the pressure of orthodox opinion it had to fix 14. We are glad so far as the committee has succeeded in breaking the time-worn customs, that were hurled upon society in the name of religion. Advocates of pre puberty marriages and their moth-eaten religious texts can no longer parade the land under the masks of god and religion. We reserve our comments till the full report is published. Meanwhile farewell, a long farewell to orthodoxy!

- *Revolt*, 30 June 1929

The Need for Marriage Legislation

(Dr. S. Mudhulakshmi Reddi, M.L.C.,)

Having been invited to an evening marriage function in an orthodox Brahmin family in the city, I was present at a small party specially arranged for ladies. As I happened to know many of those present intimately I began making enquiries after their education, their state of health, home life etc.

I felt deeply grieved when I was informed that those young girls have been not only married but their marriages also have been consummated and further those girls who were hardly 14 have been sent to their husbands homes in response to the wishes of their mothers-in-law who were eagerly looking forward to the advent of a grand child.

As I was very much moved by the story of one girl in particular who was hardly 15 and whose husband having already got tired of her, was spending his days in his mistress's house and had sent the girl to her parental home to spend her days in sorrow and loneliness. For the sake of this grief stricken child, I pleaded with the husband a medical practitioner in this very same city, who having unreasonably excited himself to a temper, bluntly refused to have anything to do with the girl, for no other fault than that of her childish frankness and candour in having complained to her mother-in-law about her husband's wayward behaviour and absence from home at nights.

What is the remedy, I asked the heartless husband, you would suggest for a minor girl like your wife, whose faults whatever they may be are excusable. He condescendingly replied that he would feed and clothe her as he would a servant, if she should serve his parents.

Then I suggested that he might at least out of humanity's sake admit her into some educational institution, like the Seva Sadan or the Sarada Home, that she might spend her youthful time usefully and profitably till he makes up his mind to take her back to his home to which he replied curtly, that he could not afford any such luxury.

I may inform the reader that this poor specimen of humanity has taken Rs.2,000 from the poor girl parents as the bridegroom price, with which amount he is running a small dispensary at a profit. These scenes are enacted daily and we in the South do not seem to give any serious thought to such a devastating disease in our midst; while the majority

of the parents themselves, whether rich or poor, whether educated or ignorant, submit helplessly to these time honoured customs and ascribe what follows to the inexorable fate. Except a few Brahmin families here and there, whose number can be counted on one's finger ends (many of whom are to be found only in the cities) who have defied society and custom in having postponed the marriage of their girls and in having permitted them to enjoy the full benefit of higher education, the rest not possessing the necessary mental courage to place their daughters happiness before anything else in the world, repeat the same blunder of early marriage and early consummation, and will never listen to any reason or rhyme. . .

It is a most painful fact to record that the sufferings of these girl mothers and their children and the self imposed racial deterioration are going on without sufficiently arresting the attention of our South Indian leaders and without stimulating them to effective and immediate action; because while at least some propaganda is being done by the members of all parties to put down drink and to remove untouchability, we feel grieved to note that even the famous leaders of the North who had been on a visit to the South, namely Dr. Moonje and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, left these topics – the deplorable condition of women and the need for reform in this Presidency – untouched, and out of their programme of talk.

So, the natural inference is that even they were afraid of losing their influence with the orthodox section of our community. The talk on the evils of untouchability and prohibition has become the fashion of the day and is on everybody's lips and how far the mere preaching on platform against untouchability has produced any change in the mentality of the upper classes will be seen by a visit to our villages; and as for prohibition, the increase in the excise revenue this year has its own significance to temperance workers.

What is the remedy then? The only effective remedy that I would suggest is the widespread education of our women on the right lines and the provision of ample facilities for their all round development, physical, moral and intellectual. I hope and I feel sure that with the rapid spread of education and knowledge among the women population, our social problems would solve themselves automatically. Invidious caste distinctions, early marriage, purdah and sanctified vice will persist so long as the mothers of the nation are kept in ignorance of the rapidly changing world conditions and the cause of India's

backwardness. Moreover, I honestly feel that unless and until we reform and recast our home life so as to suit modern conditions and remedy our defective social system, there is no hope or salvation for the large home that is the country – which change is possible only when free, enlightened and liberal minded women feel strongly the need for reform in their daily habits and customs and the necessity for a change in their mental outlook. Now the fire of enthusiasm for reform that dimly burns here and there, is in constant danger of being extinguished unless it is kept alive by constant appeal to the good sense of our people by honest reformers and the awakened, emancipated Indian womanhood.

- *Revolt,* 14 July 1929

Orthodoxi-ki Jai!

During the next few weeks, Madras has to prepare itself for a most ghastly sight. Thousands of people will be giving up their life in redemption of a vow they recently took. As a last step to prevent the Age of Consent Committee from violating the orthodox traditions, they gave the solemn warning in open conference that if the marriageable age of girls be raised they would give up their life, one and all.

The Committee has disregarded the threat and it is now fairly certain that the Government will accept its modest recommendation. In fact when Sarda's Bill next comes up for consideration, the ultimatum of these Madrasis will expire. So the glorious day – for them and for humanity – when they will teach a never to be forgotten lesson to the reformers is now only a question of time.

You may think that they merely bluffed, but that is hardly likely. Whatever their first thoughts, they have now no alternative but to carry out their threat. If they fail how can they show their face in public? And is it conceivable – I at any rate decline to think so badly of them – that these pillars of the Sanatana Dharma will stand before the world as cowards and thus disgrace that whole race? In fact, I learn most of them have already made the necessary arrangements for departure. Their only fear is that the police may prevent an organized spectacular harakiri but astute people that they are they should have no difficulty to hoodwink the guardians of law – *The Sunday Times.*

- *Revolt,* 14 July 1929

Orhodoxy at its work

Mr. Srinivasachar of Mysore, the veritable *Avatar* of Mahavishnu who presided over the Sri Vaishnavites Conference at Velur, has strongly condemned the social legislations which are under consideration in the Assembly, as being "unwarranted, unjustifiable and irreligious". Similar attacks on the interference of the Government in social matters and resolutions protesting the marriage legislations are being published in the orthodox papers of our province, as having been passed at the religious conferences. We knew, as a matter of fact, that such oppositions or supposed oppositions would arise from the orthodox quarters.

The legislation is said to be "unwarranted, unjustifiable and irreligious". We doubt whether the president wants to revoke the ancient 'holy' customs of human sacrifice and suttee, which were enjoined by the 'divine' Vedas. However much we may din into the ears of orthodoxy that religion is the creation of man and hence should change with the advancement of humanity, it turns a deaf ear to our thunders and works its own mischief whenever possible. The legislation, let the orthodox elements understand, is not unwarranted, but the result of the frequent attempts made by the three fourth of the population of the so called Hindus. It is no surprise to us, why a handful of people should take particular care of religion which is said to belong also to a class of people who are numerically stronger. That is simply to keep their pot boiling. Will they not understand at least now, that it is futile to cry over a matter which is almost nearing the end? Instead of roaring in the village corners, it would be a better and nobler thing if they prepare themselves for their wholesale suicide, which they promised to do if the Government interfered in society and religion. The human species will not be sorry for it, or at any rate, we shall never.

The marriage Bills are specially condemned by individual patrons of orthodoxy. That is no fault of theirs. If the masculine orthodoxy should be taught a severe lesson, we would suggest one thing. The lady members of the legislature should bring in a resolution at the earliest possible time, asking the Government to enforce widowhood and its concurrent effects on man also, so that no difference is made in administration of law. Widowers should not be allowed to remarry nor should they be allowed to appear before the people; they should be supplied with black clothes and their heads should also be made completely bald. They should be repulsed by the people as 'bad omens'. This kind of a

resolution would not only teach a lesson to orthodoxy, but would enable the fair sex to think awhile of the ridiculousness of their present situation. This may look like a funny suggestion but it has its own effect.

- *Revolt*, 21 July 1929

The Child Marriage Bill

I

Mr. Harbilas Sarda's Child Marriage Bill will be one of the non-official Bills that will come up for discussion at the forthcoming session of the Legislative Assembly. The Bill has received the entire support of the sane section of the people and the passing of the Bill will be looked upon as nothing less than a boon granted by the Government.

The immediate need for legislation in the matter of this age-long evil has been very often emphasized by responsible organizations and well-wishers of the country. It was about twenty years back that gentlemen like Mr. Rangachari, Mr. Mani Iyer and Mr.V. Krishnasami Iyer held Conferences and passed resolutions for increasing the age of marriage for girls (2). The Hindu Samajam, gave away a prize of Rs. 100 to Mr. Varada Iyengar of Kurnool for writing the best essay on, "*Post-puberty Marriage is Shastraic*." The Right Hon.V. S. Srinivasa Sastri compiled a book on the same subject both in English and Sanskrit. We have given only the very few of the instances that come to our memory at this moment (3).

Recently the South Indian papers are busily publishing news of protest meetings of the marriage Bill – meetings most of which are manufactured by irresponsible, unscrupulous, reactionary nonentities, and manufactured under various names from that *sanctum sanctorum*, the notorious Kumbakonam, the divine dwelling place of that illustrious bandit chief, Sri. Sankaracharia (4). We doubt whether Miss Kumbakonam is so wide-armed as to embrace the whole of India within her tender arms. Or else, what is the idea, we want to know, of all the protest meetings, (not to mention that distinguished deputation) cropping from the fertile soil alone! It is a riddle left to the editors of Newspapers, who can only best solve them. Then turning to some of the orthodox journals who have just cropped up for the time being by the pecuniary assistance of some of the bandit-chiefs, we feel immensely sorry for the necessity of answering to such insignificant journals which cover an infinitesimally small area of circulation.

One of these journals writes thus:

> "The great gurus who are undisputed experts in our sacred books, their Holinesses…(etc) have clearly stated often times that marriage is a necessary religious sacrament according to our scriptures and that the regulations of our sages enjoining pre-puberty marriages ought to be obeyed to avoid the wrath of God. Before their learning and insight how can we compare ours! We who at best can carry some tit-bits of Shastras like Sriman Malaviyaji but never the thorough knowledge of the scriptures."

The distinguished journal further continues,

> "You misled the government to drift into this unhappy step even for the introduction of the Bill, when they learned it to be religious, by telling them that the Bills were social, not religious. You could easily convince them because, with them in the West a line of demarcation between social and religious subjects has been possible. But in our country the truth is different."

Before we deal with the objections (for courtesy's sake, we call them objections) raised by this celebrated journal, we would very much like *The Hindu* answer:

> "Religious and social usages have no doubt been intertwined among Hindus to a larger degree than among other communities, but every true Hindu will acknowledge that these usages and customs have varied from age to age and period to period and the text-writers of the of the Shastras have expressly based their successive modified codes, on this definite ground. It is also within the experience of Hindus-the conservatives and reformers like - that LEGISLATION, PASSED IN THE FACE OF PROTEST ON SUCH GROUNDS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THEM AS BEING IN CONSONANCE WITH THE PREVAILING STANDARDS OF SOCIAL LIFE AND CONDUCT (Mark that!) Nor can it be doubted that the supporters of the Bill are so much concerned with the maintenance of Hindu religion and the preservation and progress of Hindu society as those who oppose the Bill from the conservative point of view."

We shall examine other aspects of the question in our next issue.

II

The enlightened editor of the journal referred to in our last issue, points out the statement of their Holinesses that marriage being a religious sacrament, the regulations of the sages enjoining pre-puberty marriages ought to be obeyed to avoid the wrath of god. Certainly! Not merely marriage. Even drinking is a religious sacrament, for have not the sages drunk the soma juice? Is it not enjoined by the Vedas? So will their Holinesses leave their shameful profession of honourable beggary and resort to the contract of toddy shops? Will their Holinesses make frequent visits to the Bosotto (5) even as their disciples are doing? There is another sacrament sanctioned by the Vedas and the Rishis of old, which their Holinesses and their ardent followers of the type of the editor, can arrange to be shown in the next World Exhibition. That is the *Powndriga Yagam*. It will be a fine sight for the Westerners to see the sanctity of the sacrifice performed with the Yagyam resulting from the union of a widow and a widower. That will well adorn the pages of the "London Illustrated Weekly," and the editor can very well be proud of this "religious sacrament".

And there is another religious sacrament sanctioned by the Vedas and the Rishis, which we immediately recommend to the editor and his clan. That is the *Purushametha Yaga* or human sacrifice referred to in the *Sadapadha Brahmana* (Slogams, 1, 2, 6, and 39.) If their Holinesses could only follow their Rishis in this respect as faithfully as they want to do in the question of marriage, we know where we would see the Achariars, Mahants and Jeeyars (*generic names of South Indian Hindu religious leaders – editors)*. At any rate we are sure to see the benign face of the learned editor peeping through the window of His Majesty's stone house. That is a thing which we very much long for.

Next we wish to point out to the ingenious editor that the wrath of god, of which he makes so much fuss, turned into liquid under the feet of Mahmud of Ghazni at Somnath, and has reached its freezing point under the much attacked alien Raj. For does not the editor see with his holy eyes that the wrath of His Majesty's Government is greater than that of the god? If not, will a Max Muller dare to translate into a "*Mlechcha*" tongue the text of a book which if a "Sudra" happens to know, his heart should be broke in twain? If not, will a Tom, Dick and Harry dare to rule a land which was ruled by such immortal beings as Rama, Krishna and Yudhishtra? If the editor denied that, let him only

try the *Purushametha Yaga* with the help of his invincible Holinesses.

Next the editor from Benares remarks that we carry only some tit-bits of Shastras like Malaviyaji when compared with the learning and insight of their Holinesses. As we pointed out in the last issue, people of the Hindu Samajam who gave a prize for the essay on post-puberty marriages and the Right Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, and a host of others who justified post-puberty marriages from the shastras themselves are at any rate more acquainted with the Shastras than the self-depreciating, humble editor from Benares. It was not the full-blown knowledge of the Shastras or his *Pranayama* practices that gave the life of Tirupathi Mahant but the surgical instrument of General Malcomson. The erudite editor of our contemporary and his admirers may be modest in telling the world that they carry only tit-bits of Shastras but their orthodox brains would tell them that they cannot hide the passages which sanction post-puberty marriages from the scriptures.

The Sastris and Acharis, whether they are lawyers or members of Legislative Councils since they are the sons of *prohits*, it is no wonder their belief in the Shastras is unshakable. Their narrow views and base ideas, we know, are due to the teachings of the Shastras. For they have read the notorious *Code of Manu* which says that "women are by nature prostitutes." What more can be expected from the admirers of such a glorious Law Book? The advocates of child marriage insist upon pre-puberty marriages on the ground that the girls would turn immoral as soon as they attain puberty. In that case, examples are not wanting where the nuptials of their own daughters and daughters-in law have been postponed many a time, for various reasons such as, disputes about dowry, the end of an examination of the bridegroom, etc., etc. In those cases, which are more than ninety out of a hundred, we ask whether the Shastris, Iyers and Acharis of the type of the intelligent editor, excommunicated those girls for violating the teachings of the ancient Rishis. It is further a matter of no small wonder to us, how the Shastras which permit the well-known *Niyoka* system of marriage, can lay down any principle of morality.

Our contention is why these devils which cite scriptures against post-puberty marriages, fail to follow the dictates of the Shastras in their own case. The *Code of Manu* has said in emphatic terms that, "the Brahmin who performs *Gayatri* continuously for three years, can be sure to fly in the air or take whatever shape he likes" (Chap, 2; Slogam

812). We want to know how many of our Brahmin friends especially the Sastris who are performing *Gayatri* for years together have developed the art of flying. Lawyer Satyamurti quotes *Parachara Smriti* in favour of child marriage (6). But his spectacled eyes do not see the mandates of the same *Smriti* which objects to the Brahmins undertaking sea-voyages and learning a foreign tongue. When this apostle of Child Marriage and his comrade Ramachandra have themselves violated the rules of the Smriti, why do these legal brains refuse to allow the same latitude to women?

That *Parachar,* himself the author of the Smriti was born to a so-called low born woman, *married after puberty*, and he himself had his son *Viyasar* in the same way, is a story told by the same Rishis. Then, His Holiness the Sankarachari himself belongs to a community where post-puberty marriage remains the custom even to this day. How is it the Sastris and Iyers are blind to this fact?

Then there are the Iyengars and Acharis who object to post-puberty marriage. The fact that Kurath Alwar and Pattar (*Tamil Vaishnavite religious figures – editors)* were responsible for the commentaries of the Vedas for the Vaishnava Siddhantam, is undisputed. Pattar was born to Kurath Alwar who married his wife after puberty. As such why should the Vaishnavites object? If these orthodox elements want to be literal followers of the Rishis, we want to know how many Brahmacharis are there among Brahmins who keep to the standard enforced by the Rishis. University examinations, Dowry competitions, Tennis tournaments, tannery shops and hotel managements are not the duties enjoined by the Rishis to the Brahmacharis. The mantras which are told at the nuptials to-day are utterly different from those ordained by the Shastras. The present-day mantras of the Brahmin Brahmacharis are "silver vessels, wrist watches, further education and cash money." Then why quote Scriptures for girls alone?

We have tried to prove in the little space at our disposal how the verdicts of the Smritis and Shastras do not in either way stand against post-puberty marriage. Other rational causes for the necessity of preventing Child marriage and the physiological reasons put forward by eminent doctors, backed up by statistical information, have been dwelt upon by many who have a closer acquaintance and a more through knowledge of the problem. The social and economic evils of child marriage and the consequent degeneration the Hindu society have

been time and again sufficiently laughed at by the westerners.

The passing of the Bill above all, teaches us the severe lesson, which we have been urging so often, and for which we and our followers have been brandished as 'traitors to the country', that the co-operation and goodwill of the Government is highly essential for the achievements of reform in the priest-ridden and caste-ridden society of India. If we have at any time found fault with the Government it was more for their not taking the initiative in matters of social reform, than for the rest. In this case, the attitude of the Government in the last stages of the Bill is highly commendable and is sure to be applauded by the Governments of other nations.

We would be therefore failing in our duty if we omit to acknowledge the timely help offered by the Government in the passing of the Bill. We are more gratified to note that the amendment regarding the grant of exemption to certain communities and in certain cases was negatived by the House by a large majority. The incidents connected with the Marriage Bill, the forces of opposition and the reactionary elements of society might have given a clear idea to the Government of the possible dangers form interested quarters that are likely to confront them in their future attempts at social legislation. We are much thankful to the Government for having taken the cause of justice and equality as against the discordant forces of orthodoxy. Farewell, a very long farewell to orthodoxy!

- *Revolt*, 25 August, 1 September 1929

The Disgraceful Deputation

(G. Sumati Bai, B.A., L.T.,)

It may interest the public to have the search-light thrown on the orthodox deputation to the Viceroy concerning the Child Marriage Bill. The deputation has in its protest against Sarda's Bill loudly justified Child Marriage. But how far their assertions can stand the limelight of reason is indeed very doubtful. They state that the "marriageable age commences at eight and continues upto ten". What is the authority for such a claim? There are not less than thirty-six Smritis, each with its own interpretation and oft at variance with one another. No two editions of the same Smriti even agree on all points and often the contradictory passages found in the same Smriti are palpable indications of either

incongruities or interpolations and so their doubtful value. Which Smriti then shall have the force of law in society?

It is further stated by the Deputation that "the law of consummation permits sexual intercourse sixteen days after a girl attains puberty and it is added that if this intercourse is postponed intentionally, without its being performed after the first puberty, the party responsible for the postponement becomes tainted with the sin of bhroona-hatya and there is no prayaschitta for such a sin." Gargeya and several other Rishis are of the opinion that "normally the indications of womanhood and youth show themselves in women in the sixteenth year". In the Kala-Nitnaya-Pradipika, it is clearly stated that the occurrence of menstruation in girls below sixteen is abnormal and that it is traceable to one of the three causes - artificial pressure, use of drugs and medicines and indulgence in lascivious thoughts". Sushruta, a great authority on Ayurveda has said "when a youth less than twenty-five years old has sexual intercourse with a girl less than sixteen years old, there will probably be no conception; if there be a conception, there will probably be an abortion; if there be no abortion, the child born will most probably die early; if it dies not, weak will it be in all its organs. Do not allow sexual intercourse then when the husband and wife are still tender in years". In the face of such opinions which are shastraic too, is it advisable to talk of cohabitation for very young girls? And that within sixteen days after puberty?

To the repositories of Sastras, threatened abortions due to immature age of the married girl do not come under Bhruna-hatya (the killing of the foetus) whereas the wisely wanted prevention perhaps of a very probable conception is construed as murder of the foetus!! Does it besides stand to reason to talk of a foetus at all in the case of a virgin?

"Hindu Law relating to marriage was based on the Dharma Sastras which in turn conform to the Vedas and hence binding on all Hindus who follow the Sastraic laws and no authority spiritual or temporal can alter them" is yet another statement of the Deputation. It then means that the Vedas are the authority on the matter. If so, what is the marriageable age according to the Vedas? There is ample evidence to indicate that in the Vedic days women also were *like men*, expected to observe the period of Brahmacharya before marriage and to acquire knowledge thereby. The Vedic mantras of marriage themselves are clear proofs of the high cultural attainments and the mature age of women

at the time of marriage. Surely they could not be girls of eight and ten that attained so much, in pradhana-homa, pravesa-homa and sesha-homa, the husband and wife both stated their sam-kalpa and chanted the Rihs.

Is it not meaningless then to perform pre-pubescent marriages chanting those same Vedic mantras which contemplate post- pubescent marriage? And is not pre-pubescent marriage inconsistent with the teachings of the Vedas, the bed-rock of Hindu Dharma and religion as the orthodox themselves call it?

"Premature decay and death ascribed to the child-marriage system ought really to be ascribed to the ruin of village life" is also another assertion of the Deputation. One fails to understand what is meant thereby when the bulk of the nation are still in the villages, many of them untouched by the influences of town-life. As medical practitioner I have the opportunity of knowing and moving with the villagers of many a district belonging to British India as well as the Indian States. This Premayatana Asram is in the very midst of such villages and to serve and study them is its first concern. My observation is that the ravages of child marriage are most rampant in the villages where the people are more ignorant than the town folk. Cradle marriages are very frequent in villages and child widows there are far more than in towns. Unhealthy children and ailing child-mothers are a matter of fact in villages as even efficient medical advice or the aid of trained midwifery cannot be had there. The havoc of child-marriage in towns has been constantly coming to light whereas in villages it never does so; for who should throw the search-light on those unfortunate dens of so-called Dharma? Ignorance buries deep its own ravages and the victims thereof! The glory of the villages one might sing from town and city platforms but would that tall talk had peeped but once into these forlorn holes!

The Deputation seems to be of the opinion that the abolition of child marriage would lead to "the repetition of evils amongst modern youth so graphically described by Judge Lindsay". A query may be rightly asked if such evils are not already existing in our society and that amongst the orthodox too. Veneral diseases, self-abuse, sex-perversions and what not are not wanting in our midst and child marriage has not stemmed their tide. Only we have not here a Judge Lindsay to blow the ashes off the smouldering embers! Besides, may I ask if Judge Lindsay suggests

child marriage as a remedy for the evils he has brought to light? Rational education and better traming, plain talk and destruction of prudery and make-believe in the young – this is what he advocates and aye that is what we need most too. Does it not then behove society to give its boys and girls sufficient time for the sound education so imperative for happy matrimony, instead of harnessing them in so-called marriage long before they even get an inkling of what the institution stands for?

"No genuine attempt has been made by the Committee to ascertain the opinion of Indian ladies, 90% of whom would shudder at the thought of post-puberty marriage" the Deputation has said. They are probably unaware of the fact that Women's Associations all over India, All India Women's Conference and not less than 22 constituent Conferences have with one voice denounced child marriage. Questionnaires besides were sent to almost all educated women interested in social work to ascertain their opinion and many of them have been personally consulted on the subject. What then does the Deputation mean by asserting that the Committee has not ascertained the opinion of Indian ladies?

Perhaps by Indian they mean only "orthodox women" who have not peeped beyond the four walls of their houses! Have such women either the education or the economic freedom or the necessary observations of affairs beyond their house to express their opinion on anything? Have they any idea of either modern science or ancient lore to weigh them both in the balance or reason? They have been treading the beaten track too long to move aside and have worn their fetters so long that they have ceased to gall them and what is worse is that they have grown to love them as the very ornaments of life. What opinion can be expected of them when they neither have nor are permitted to have any individuality of their own, or even any idea even not compatible with the mind of their self-appointed lord? They but nod assent to the dictates of the so-called husbands, the keepers of their conscience. They are fit tools of their orthodox slave drivers to use as they like. Ignorance is bliss and it is not mere folly to be wise but positively dangerous with them to be so!

The crowning point in the argument of the orthodoxy in upholding child marriage is that it is a spiritual union and therefore can take place at an early age. The question arises whether matters of spirit are so easy for even children and youngsters to venture. Or is it but proving

the saying "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread". If marriage is spiritual, is it not more the reason why the parties concerned should be more wiser with age and experience? Further, granting that child marriage is a spiritual concern, why should man marry again when his wife dies? Surely the wife's spirit is not dead. Or is it that even the spirit of the wives of the orthodoxy perish with death. Or is it woman's spirit perishes with the body while only that of man lasts to protect his widow? Further, the spirit impervious to fire must certainly be untaintable by impurity of any sort. Where then is room for any charge against impurity or any scope for jealousy and the mischief it works? Convenience may quote philosophy but the Science of Social Life cannot dare to ignore the facts that stare it in the face. Philosophy that ignores facts only veils the Truth and what religion is that which poses to protect which does not concern itself with the very facts of daily life? Let orthodoxy answer. -

***Revolt*, 22 September 1929**

Farewell Orthodoxy!

The brilliant victory of Mr. Sarda's Marriage Bill in the Legislative Assembly has relieved us from a state of anxiety and expectation which we were passing through. The happy news of the successful passing of the Bill by an overwhelming majority has literally lifted the people from the coils of orthodoxy and obscurantism. The minimum age of marriage for girls and boys has been fixed at 14 and 18 respectively and the law will be applicable to the people of all classes, castes and creeds.

At every stage the Bill was opposed and attacked by the forces of reactionarism in the names of religion and custom. The army of orthodoxy headed by that apology for a lawyer, marched to the very fortress of their enemies and threatened them with 'curses' and 'hunger strikes'. Their infantry in the rear, being backed up by arms and ammunitions from the fortress of Sri Sankarancharier barked and roared from behind. The Captains of orthodoxy headed by the South Indian Commander (*the reference is to S. Satyamurthi – editors*) made pretensions of a thundering warfare within the four walls of the Legislative Assembly. Manufactured news were published in the fortnightly organ of orthodoxy and learned leaderettes were written by enlightened editors. Hymns of praise were sung on the 'religious neutrality' of the Government and the proclamation of Queen Victoria was the burden

of their song. A strenuous attempt was also made to flatter the Government on its attitude of 'religious non interference'. Unhappily, these vile machinations of orthodoxy to hinder the progress of the Bill have not only proved fruitless, but has very much lowered the forces of orthodoxy and the individuals who have been responsible for it, in the estimation of the cultured world.

The passing of the Bill above all, teaches us the severe lesson, which we have been urging so often, and for which we and our followers have been brandished as 'traitors to the country', that the co-operation and goodwill of the Government is highly essential for the achievements of reform in the priest-ridden and caste-ridden society of India. If we have at any time found fault with the Government it was more for their not taking the initiative in matters of social reform, than for the rest. In this case, the attitude of the Government in the last stages of the Bill is highly commendable and is sure to be applauded by the Governments of other nations.

We would be therefore failing in our duty if we omit to acknowledge the timely help offered by the Government in the passing of the Bill. We are more gratified to note that the amendment regarding the grant of exemption to certain communities and in certain cases was negatived by the House by a large majority. The incidents connected with the Marriage Bill, the forces of opposition and the reactionary elements of society might have given a clear idea to the Government of the possible dangers form interested quarters that are likely to confront them in their future attempts at social legislation. We are much thankful to the Government for having taken the cause of justice and equality as against the discordant forces of orthodoxy. Farewell, a very long farewell to orthodoxy!.

- *Revolt*, 29 September 1929

The Secret of It

One of our readers has asked us the question. "Why do the Brahmins as a class oppose the Sarda Act, when the Act is more for their own benefit than for others?" Our friend should understand in the first place that the Act is not opposed by all the Brahmins; it is generally the orthodox section which strongly protests against it. Then there is another important fact that the women-folk of the community do not also object to the Act. The Act has a more direct bearing upon women than upon

men, as the objections are in all cases directed against the marriageable age for girls only. When therefore, we see that neither the women nor the progressive section of the Brahmins object to the Act, the answer to the question is very simple. The balance is the orthodox members of the community who earn their livelihood in the name of the Hindu religion. They know that even at the risk of some disadvantages to themselves, Hinduism should not be left to be tampered with. This time, if they permit the legislation for marriage, they know there will come a time when our children will enact laws for the removal of priesthood, untouchability and so on, which will seriously hamper the monopolistic position of the orthodox Brahmins. They would therefore rather wish young widows in their homes than lose their privilege of birth. That is the secret of it.

- *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

Shame to Madras

In the elected Indian members who voted in favour of the Sarda Bill, 1 was from Madras; 6 from Bombay; 7 form N.P.; 8 form Bihar; 4 from the Panjab; 1 from Ajmer, Merwada. Of the elected Indians who voted against the Bill 5 were from Madras; 2 from Bombay; 3 from Bengal; 1 from U.P.; 2 from Bihar and 1 from Assam. From Madras one member voted for the Bill and 5 voted against. And Madras is boasted by its people to possess the salt of the land. We would be glad beyond measure if the province of Madras brings forth a Miss Mayo in order to paint her fire eating law makers in their true colours. And the next election is to come off shortly, Madras Orthodoxy ki-Jai!!

- *Revolt,* 17 November 1929

Child Marriage Question

Why has child marriage endured so long in a country which for more than a century has been ruled to a great extent by British officials inspired by British ideals? asks Prof. Rushbrook Williams and answers the question himself in an English Newspaper, Simply because, he says no alien government, differing in religion and outlook from the races which it rules, dared to take the risk of interfering with a custom which thousands of the most revered spiritual leaders have declared to be an integral part of the Hindu religion. Hence it is that while the evil of the child marriage system has long been perceived, Government action has been timid and halting. Significantly enough says Prof.

Rushbrook Williams, the India which is ruled by Indians, the India of the States has been the first to take action. For some years progressive Indian rulers, like those of Baroda, Bikanir, Gondal, Kashmir, Kotah and other States, have been steadily discountenancing, child marriage exerting their great power and influence among the more conservative elements among their subjects.

This no excuse. An enlightened government which boasts itself on its material and cultural advancement, has got no business to excuse itself saying that they should not interfere in an "alien religion". That evidently means the government are anxious to have a wholesale conversion so that they can "interfere" freely. It is not an "integral part of Hindu religion" that the Britishers should rule the Hindus. Will the Britishers vacate India? Certainly not. Then why not the government shakes off the white Brahminhood in them and be more fair and sincere towards the masses of India? Though we are certainly glad at their inestimable help in passing of the Sarda Act, we cannot but request them on behalf of the humanity not to be "timid and halting" in their duty towards the people.

- *Revolt*, 17 November 1929

The "Bombay Chronicle" on the Muslim Protest

We publish the following note by the *Bombay Chronicle* on the Muslim deputation to the Viceroy, protesting against the Sarda Act:-

To what pathetic straits those who are wont, on the slightest or no provocation, to raise the spurious cry of "Religion in Danger" is best illustrated by the composition of the so-called Muslim delegation which waited on the Viceroy on Saturday with a request to him to exempt Muslims from the operation of the Sarda Act as well as by the manner and matter of their request. The deputation was led by Mr. Mahomed Ali (*nationalist associated with the Khilafat agitations – editors)*. The latter has seldom missed an opportunity caviling at those who have entered the legislature. He has not only to explain to the public the inconsistency of his present action with his criticism of his fellow Congressmen but he has also to demonstrate what title he and those who accompanied him had to speak on behalf of the Muslim community of India. They were speaking only for themselves when they told the Viceroy: "We Mussalmans will never submit to such intolerant interference with our

sacred law, and will not hesitate to disobey any law robbing us of religious freedom, and will not be deterred by the Sarda Act".

All self-respecting Muslims will hang their head in shame at the mere thought of being some co-religionists of theirs like Mr. Mahomed Ali and his band of social reactionaries who give utterance to such sentiments as constitute an outrage on Islam and public decency. What is the "religious freedom" against the loss of which they are hurling their threats? It is that they should be free to consign innocent girls under fourteen to the indescribable inhumanities of child wedlock. Lord Irwin in his reply to the deputation pointed out that in a matter of this kind it was impossible for modern State to disinterest itself because it clearly bore upon social questions which must be of vital interest to it. In fact, though the Viceroy did not say so, men like Mr. Mahomed Ali must realise that all right thinking men and women in India have made up their mind to do away with social injustices and cruelties in spite of what "religion" according to its votaries, may say to the contrary. But in regard do Sarda Act, it is the Muslim opponents who are acting contrary to the spirit of Islam. For, according to Islam, marriage is a contract based on the free consent of both the parties to it and it is preposterous to suggest that a girl who has hardly reached the age of fourteen can enter into such a contract. The fact, that there is no provision in Islamic law fixing the lowest age for marriage is a proof, if a proof were needed, to show that it does not contemplate any marriage as valid except a marriage between two adults who have reached the age of majority. Those Muslims who are opposing the Sarda Act are not only violating the laws of humanity but also the letter and spirit of Islamic injunction and it is against such misguided champions, who are not much different form the ignorant and fanatical Mullahs who were the principal authors of the recent anarchy in Afghanistan, that the Muslim community in Indian needs protection.

- *Revolt*, 24 November 1929

Notes to 3.2

1. M. K. Acharya was an orthodox and conservative Congress legislator who earned the consistent ire of the self-respecters.
2. These were Madras Congressmen from an earlier generation, who were active in the first decades of the twentieth century.
3. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri was a member of the Servants of India Society founded by G. K. Gokhale. He held many important posts in the British Indian Government and later became a confidante and close friend of Gandhi. He backed the Post-Puberty

Marriage Bill that was introduced in the Madras Council in 1914.

4. The present Sankara Mutt in Conjeevaram was originally located at Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district, until the late 1930s. Incidentally, this Mutt which draws its glory from the persona of Adi Shankara, was not one of the original mutts founded by him.

5. Bosotto was a confectioner from Corsica who arrived in Chennai in the late 1920s and took over one of Chennai's best-known hotels from a fellow Corsican.

6. S. Satyamurti was a prominent Congressman and a legislator, whose love of power was legion. He was opposed to the reform party and like M. K. Acharya was refuted and criticized by the self-respecters. (See also p. 29, 193, for earlier critical and satiric references to S. Satyamurti.)

3.3 The Devadasi Abolition Bill

The Brothels Bill

The Select Committee on the Brothels Bill has met during the last week, and several witnesses have been examined. We understand that the Committee will meet again in July or August in order to consider the Bill in the light of the evidence gathered. Almost all the witnesses, have dwelt, in the first place, upon the imperative necessity of some sort of legislation in this matter. There are only differences in methods of the "Suppression of brothels and immoral traffic". Though we cannot be sanguine about the success of completely rooting out this vicious practice, we are sure the passing of this Bill will do a great deal towards the Devadasis Bill, which is on the anvil of legislation. It is an indisputable fact that the brothels are a curse to Hindu society. They have multiplied enormously, in towns and cities. Youths fall a prey to this enticing demon, and young girls are ruined for ever. If Miss Mayo's statistics reveal an appalling figure of people suffering from venereal diseases, especially in cities, it shows but the degeneration of our society. By this, we do not mean that other countries are entirely free from this vice.

The witnesses have given their suggestions as to how the brothels are to be closed. Two of three witnesses have stated that licensed brothel houses may be recommended as a first step. Though a wise suggestion, it will not serve the purpose of the Bill, for the licensed prostitutes themselves (who will be naturally very small in number) will in course of time, become the storehouses of disease. Moreover, it will only entail a concentrated attention on a limited scale, which will in no way serve the purpose of the Bill. Some of the witnesses have stated that the Bill shall be confined for the present to Madras, where there are better facilities for trying the experiment than in the mofussil. When it is made why that poverty is potent cause for the increase of commercialized vice, it is essential that the application of the Act is extended to the mofussil also. The act, we suppose, is not intended to reform the morals of the people. It is an impossibility. Morality cannot be forced upon a people, but it is a thing which should be felt instinctively. The aim of the Bill is to protect the public from annoyance and from vices anti social. The passing of this Act will also minimize, to a great extent, the abnormal increase of people suffering from venereal diseases. This will be a boon to our society at least so far as it checks

open commerce at the expense of minor girls.

Another point at issue is whether the Devadasis may also be brought under this Act. Queerly enough one of the witnesses has stated, that the Devadasis should be exempted as they are following the profession in accordance with the Hindu customs. Another has stated that they follow the Gandharva system of Hindu marriages, and hence should not be classified as prostitutes. Perhaps these witnesses hold that the Devadasis being the mistresses of "the heavenly father" will not stoop to be so low as to entice ordinary mortals. Fanciful indeed! Let not the advocates of Hinduism try to establish their reputation in this sphere also. It is enough if they direct their well merited attention towards other things. Though some of the witnesses have distinguished between a Devadasi and a prostitute, we are of the conviction that it is only the institution of the Devadasis that has encouraged prostitution in the country. The dedication of girls to temples has attracted bigger crowds to these places, and consequently the profession has extended to other communities also. In this connection, we like to refer the readers to Gandhiji's criticism of Hindu temples, as the homes of prostitutes. When such is the case we wonder how there can be a distinction between a Devadasi and a prostitute. Both are identically the same, so far as the vice and its effects are concerned. The Devadasis may be earning from the temples, but it is undeniable that they earn through the temples. This is the special advantage which the Devadasis have over the prostitutes. Hence the greater necessity for wiping out the former.

As regards the vesting of power in the hands of the Commissioner of Police, the witnesses have been a little reluctant. Certainly too much of power in the hands of the police in general, as regards social matters, may tend to its misuse. But it cannot be denied that the police is the only department which can handle the problem at all, with some amount of success. It is also necessary that all social workers and other organization like the Vigilance Association should actively participate in the work, and help the Commissioner in all possible ways. The services of the Public Health Department should also be utilized with great benefit.

The constructive proposals of the Bill, such as starting vocational training schools for women, establishing Industrial Homes, and training the victims as nurses and midwives, need the special attention of the government. It is only these constructive methods that can save the

situation. It is only these that can effectively handle the problem. These are the only methods by which suitable provisions can be made for the custody and proper treatment of rescued girls. Compulsory medical treatment of diseased prostitutes is also quite essential. The disease is eating into the very vitals of Hindu society, and the degradation of the race has already begun. If the Bill really aims at the stopping of indiscriminate sexual intercourse, if it really aims at wiping out commercialized vice, and keeping away minor girls from environments which lead to prostitution, the constructive proposals mentioned above, should receive the immediate attention of the government. The penalizing of the keeping of brothels, and inflicting fines and punishments on the brothel keepers will be very effective in checking the overgrowth of brothels in all towns and cities. As it is the police is not vested with adequate power to take the initiative in the mater.

The main object of the Bill, we understand is "to remove the removable causes of the temptations". As we have pointed out already, the evil cannot be entirely suppressed without the goodwill of the people. Srimathi Ramamirithammal, one of the witnesses, has wisely pointed out that the law should be very rigorous and should come into force immediately (1). About the institution of Devadasis, she says, "the number of Devadasis, who had taken to the profession purely for religious reasons, would be very small. None except a few rich people, a few temple trustees and those who traffic in the prostitutes support the institution. The dedication of girls to prostitution in the name of religion should be abolished by means of strict legislation". We hope the Select committee would use the materials it has gathered in the best possible ways and do its utmost in ridding the society of its age long curse

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929.

Sex Equality League

A Reuter's message reports the proceedings of a Conference in London of the British Commonwealth League, which aims at securing sex equality. Mrs. Jinarajadasa spoke on the evils of the system of Devadasis and prostitution in India and said that the majority of the people in India were anxious for social reform, but whenever any regulation or Bill was introduced in the legislatures, Government always opposed it. She appealed to the various women's organisations of the Empire to pass resolutions urging the Secretary of State and the Viceroy to yield

to the people's wishes. A resolution was passed congratulating Dr. Muthulakshmi of the Madras Legislative Council on the introduction of her Bill dealing with devadasis and abolition of the system of dedicating infants to Hindu temples.

- *Revolt*,23 June 1929

A Social Worker Prosecuted

Case Against Miss Ramamitrtha Ammal

Our correspondent from Mayavaram writes: Miss Ramamirtha Ammal, well known in Mayavaram district as a Congress worker and later as a propagandist of the Self-respect movement is now conducting a campaign against the institution of Devadasis and has already brought about hundreds of marriages of girls dedicated to the immoral trade. Her enthusiasm for the cause of fallen women has involved her in a criminal prosecution.

It appears that Miss. Ramamirtham attempted to persuade one Dasi Thangam, resident of Moovalur, aged twenty and a relation of Miss Ramamirtham promised to help Dasi Thangam in securing a decent husband. The mother of Dasi Thangam however got incensed at the prospect of the daughter leaving off the profession and a quarrel seems to have ensued.

On the 7th of last month the mother of Dasi Thangam filed a complaint in the Mayavaram sub-magistrate's court against Miss Ramamirtham and six others alleging that the accused used criminal force against the complainant and her two sons in an attempt to carry away Dasi Thangam with a view to rescue her from the profession. The case is posted to the 17th September for hearing. Much interest is aroused here in the case.

- *Revolt*, 15 September 1929

Notes to 3.3

1. Ramamirthammal, from the devadasi community, became one of its foremost and early opponents. She wrote a novel, *Dasigalin Mosavalai* (The Deceitful Web of the Dasis), which berated the practice of dedicating girls to temples. She campaigned amongst devadasis, seeking their support for the abolition of the devadasi system. She was part of the Self-respect movement and one of its leading public speakers. In 1949, when C.N. Annadurai founded the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), she joined that party.

4 EDUCATING AND ORGANISING WOMEN

Advance Sisters!

The Annual Report of the Queen Mary's College for the year 1928-29 gives the following figures of students:

Europeans 19; Anglo-Indians 24; Indian Christians 49; Brahmins 86; Non-Brahmins 48; Mohammedans 8; and Parse 1.

Though the total number of students may not be appreciably great, due to the causes referred to by the principal, we feel it our duty to point out the overbearing importance of the number of students from each community. We are glad beyond measure that there are eight students from the Muhammadian community in spite of the rigorous rules of pardha. We long to see the day when our Muhammadian sisters will prove themselves worthy of their co-religionists in Turkey and follow the noble and courageous example set by them. Next we would be failing in our duty if we omit to mention the greater strength of the Non-brahmins over the Brahmins. Though the number may be proportionately a small one, we feel it a pride to see the happy augury that pushes us on in our onward march to the goal of individual freedom and equal justice. We wish the Non-brahmins a quicker pace and a bolder march. And we wish in general, a more rapid growth in the strength of girls taking to higher education, who could only win their emancipation from the coils of the greedy *man*.

- *Revolt*, 25 August 1929

Education of Muslim Girls

A Lecture

The Seventh anniversary of the Baith-ul-Thulba (Students' Home), was held on Saturday last in the Muslim High School Hall, Triplicane, Miss De La Hey, Principal, Queen Mary's College, presiding.

Mrs. Henseman, who next delivered the annual address on "Education of Muslim Girls", in the course of her speech, pointed out that three per cent of the girls of the Muslim community attended primary schools, while the percentage of the Hindu girls was only 2.5. Hence, so far as

elementary education was concerned, the Muslim girls attended in a majority, but only in the matter of higher education, probably owing to pardah system, their community was far behind other communities. Now that the first girl among them had taken up her degree, it was up to them to realize the need for educating their girls and not to let go the opportunities that were afforded to them.

After reading a paper on the subject by an eminent Muslim lady of Bengal, the lecturer proceeded to say that the world, as they saw it, was good enough to live in, but it ought to be their endeavor to leave the world better than it was. Education of women was a pressing question all over India, and when the whole nation was advancing in the matter of female education, she did not know why one particular community, should lag behind. There were several great women among them, and given proper opportunities, they would shine in the world.

The president in the course of her concluding speech, said that she would not see how any community or nation could progress, while the one half of its was lagging behind. She did not suggest that all the girls of the community should take degrees, but she thought that the education was quite essential.

Then again, if they wanted their girls to be educated by ladies of their own community, it was necessary that at least some of them, to begin with, ought to receive higher education. Referring to the comments of certain persons on the position of women, in the West, much of the philanthropic and unselfish work was done by women there. It was rather too late in the day to suggest that they ought not to go forward. If they wanted India to take her right place in the nations of the world, they ought to educate their women. She requested some of the best among the community to come forward and give them a lead at this time.

- *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

Women's College in Benares

The Women's Collage in the Benares Hindu University is a very useful institution. The University is being two square miles there is adequate room for extension for all institutions there. The whole university is situated at a distance from the city. The Women's College and hostel occupy a distinct section of the University, though there is not the least difficulty for the girl students to take part in all the activities of the

University. No purdah is observed. Unmarried Hindu girls of 17 and upwards from all provinces of India receive education here. Girl students of the B.A., B.Sc., M.A. and M.Sc. classes attend the same lectures as the young men preparing for these degrees, the arrangements being co-educational. There are separate teaching arrangements for the girls only for the Intermediate classes.

Though there are arrangements for the separate messing of girls of different castes, most of them have their food cooked in the same dining hall. They do not generally even care to inquire about one another's caste.

Facilities are given to the girls to play different games. We think arrangements would be made to teach them lathi play and similar arts of defence. We understand that Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Vice-Chancellor of the Hindu University, has in contemplation the laying down of a long riding track for the use of the girl students of his University, so that they may become expert horse-women. There is ample room for such a course. We hope the pundit's idea will soon materialize.

The students of the Women's College do not have to pay any tuition fees, the teaching being entirely free. Besides this, an endowment by Mr. Ghansyam Das Birla enables twenty-two students to have free board also. No girl residing in the hostel attached to the College has to pay any room rent. Lodging and tuition are thus free for all.

-*The Welfare*.

- *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

All-Kerala Hindu Women's Conference

The following is an extract from the presidential address of Mrs. Kallianikutty Amma, wife of the Senior Raja of Nilambur at the All-Kerala Hindu women's conference held at Thirunavaly:

The President in the course of her address dwelt on the deplorable condition of the Hindu society in Kerala today and pointed out that it was the duty of the women of Kerala to find out ways and means for

remedying the same. The condition of the women of the Nambudiri community which in point of social position and wealth, occupied the first rank in Kerala was most deplorable. It was encouraging however to find from the proceedings of the "Yogakshemam" sabha, which was the premier association of the community, that the young men and women were realizing the necessity for coming forward and putting a stop to this state of affairs. If in point of social position and wealth, it was the Nambudiri community which stood first in numbers and actual strength, it was the Nair community that took the first place in intellect. They were the rulers and leaders of Kerala in former days. Their women enjoyed a freedom which was unknown till recently to even the most advanced people of Europe. But owing to their tendency to imitate the customs of the Brahmins and other causes, the condition of the Nairs and particularly of their women had degenerated. Today there were families whose women were forbidden to marry any but the members of the Brahmin caste. The position of the Nair women had degenerated so much that numbers of them could be seen even in the most distant parts of India eking out an existence in the most miserable manner. A good deal could be done to remedy this state of affairs by providing employment through the agency of co-operative societies to the poorer among them. She then criticized the practice of untouchability and urged upon her sisters to pledge themselves not to be inactive, but to work for the amelioration of their lot. She pleaded strongly for throwing open the temples to all Hindus without distinction of caste or creed. She concluded her speech, arguing the necessity for the spread of education and for providing facilities to the children of the depressed classes, to join the schools and receive education along with the children of the other castes.

– *Revolt*, 8 May 1929

Nambudri Women Revolt

The Nambudiri women, who are the sole victims of the Purdha system in Kerala have just commenced their campaign for self expression and advancement as is evidenced by their open letter to the lady Member of the Cochin Legislative Council. The memorandum, while dwelling upon the innumerable decrees of their society which are inexorable, laments their lack of education and want of freedom to act according to their likes in the matter of marriage and other personal issues, and request the lady member to take up their cause within the Council

and proceed on sure and sound lines by initiating legislative measures for ensuring their steady progress through ordered lines. The memorandum is important in that it is the first of its kind, to be issued by the Nambudiri "andharjanams" (*that is, those who are meant to be indoors – editors).*

– *Revolt*, 5 June 1929

Devanga Ladies Conference, Coimbatore

A conference of the Devanga ladies was held on the 2nd instant at Sharada Girls' School, Coimbatore. Mrs. K.V. Lakshmi Devi Ammal of Bangalore presided. Mrs. Lalitha Balasundaram (Member, District Educational Council), the Chairwoman of the Reception Committee read the welcome address in which she emphasised the necessity of female education, house keeping, nursing etc. She also held that the age of consent for boys and girls should be 20 and 15 respectively and marriages should be conducted in the most economical manner possible.

Mrs. Lakshmidevi ,the President of the Conference then delivered her presidential address, in the course of which she advised the ladies to take care of their household properly, and educate their children. She also fixed the age of consent for girls at 15, and condemned early and child marriages.

The following are the resolutions passed at the Ladies Conference:

1) Each girl should read at least up to the secondary class.

2) The Government be requested to grant scholarships to deserving poor girls for prosecuting higher education.

3) Girls should be married only after the age of 15 or 16.

4) The parents should marry their daughters only after their consent to marry the selected bridegrooms.

5) The conference condemns bigamy among men

6) Young windows should remarry and they should be given equal status in society.

7) Widows should have right over their husbands' property

8. Girls should have equal right of share in their father's property.

9. There should be inter-marriages among the various sub-castes of the Devanga community.

- *Revolt*, 5, June 1929

Ceylon Youth Conference: Presidential Address

The following is an extract of the presidential address delivered by Mrs. Rukmini Lakshmipathi, B.A., at the All Ceylon Indian Youth's Conference held at Kandy on the 7th July :-

In the march of world events the one outstanding phenomenon which catches the human eye and greets us everywhere is the Renaissance of youth. It is chiefly characterized by a feeling of impatience to destroy the old order of society on the one hand and to reconstruct a new one on more humanitarian and patriotic foundation on the other. Justice and righteousness and equal opportunities for all have become the watchwords of youth and Rousseau's famous dictum that man is born free, is an article of faith with youths. Their mission in life is to serve humanity so as to enable it to live a richer and fuller life. They are as much the builders of tomorrow as they are the pillars of society. The youth movement in all lands has become a recognized reality and not without cultivating a broad and balanced outlook could the youths hope to fulfill this mission in life. The motive force behind the movement is the spirit of renunciation and self-sacrifice.

When the Youths of Italy once asked Garibaldi what reward they were going to have for their trouble, he replied that hunger, starvation and pain shall be their recompense. What is essential for a youth is to utilize his enthusiasm for solid constructive work, never once losing sight of the central fact that he is a great creative force. Goethe says," We must be young to do great things". What humanity is striving to achieve is to bring about a creative revolution, a revolution' which will teach respect for all things as are just, true and honest and which will result in creating a profound sense of reverence for life. Youths are the trustees of posterity and they have a great function to discharge. With a rich heritage behind them they must needs dedicate themselves to the service of the motherland.

At this crucial and psychological period of India's history a thorough overhauling of things is an imperative necessity and many a genuine attempt is being made to reshape society at its base. A more sturdy and courageous generation is required to fulfill to perfection the aims and

objects of the new movement. What is needed now is a radical revolution, affecting all aspects of life which will rid the country of the thousand and one evils it is suffering from socially and politically. Weak and disorganized as we are, and full of internal communal squabbles and other disruptive elements and above all suffering under foreign bondage for years, the Youth Movement cannot be more welcome anywhere than in India and hence the responsibility of the Indian Youths is heavier. Youths have got their own problems to solve no less important than the urgent and pressing political problems of the day. They have to safeguard their interests as against the inroads of the elders. Such questions of an all absorbing nature as untouchability, prohibition, forced labour, child marriage, abolition of caste system, women's education, physical culture, rural reconstruction, Swadeshi and co-operation are matters of serious consideration for Youths. Only Young India can offer the right solution for all these problems. The youths have to take a definite lead in these matters, particularly regarding a firm resolve not to marry undeveloped immature girls of tender age.

There are many urgent social problems which have to be tackled by the younger generation. No other country in the world suffers more from self-inflicted evils than India. Unspeakable social evils like child marriage, enforced child-widowhood, untouchability, drink, ignorance, insanitation, unemployment and soul-killing poverty, the institution of Devadasi system and their dedication to temples, caste system in all its rigidity have established themselves in our midst and these have to be uprooted by State legislation wherever necessary. The cry of 'religion in danger' is raised by the orthodox people too often. Orthodox opinion as usual has not scrupled to attack beneficial measures like Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda's Child Marriage Prevention Bill and the Age of Consent Bill now on the anvil of the Indian Legislature. Here is the splendid opportunity for youths to vindicate themselves by helping to create a favourable public opinion for the enactment and successful working of these and other kinds of social legislation.

The feminist movement

The Feminist movement in India is the outcome of the awakening that has taken place among the womanhood in Asia. The longing for emancipation is perceptible in countries from Turkey in the West to Japan in the Far East. Through their own initiative and through the surging desire for self-expression woman have made bold to break

down all those irrational, unequal and meaningless customs which kept them in subjection. It is difficult to realize the amount of feeling and the amount of activity with which women of different countries are working to do away with these shackles. The political and social fabric of China, stationary for over 2000 years has within the last few decades changed wonderfully and that too beyond recognition. In China, the new spirit among women rebelled against the practice of binding their feet in close fitting shoes. Elsewhere, women have revolted against the tyranny of the evil and purdah. In our own country, educated women are waging relentless war against the inhuman customs of child marriage and enforced widowhood. In countries like Turkey, Persia and Burma, women have shown signs of self-assertion. It is extremely unfortunate that the attempts of Queen Souriya and King Amanuallah to bring about a social regeneration in Afghanistan should have received a set back (see below pp. 582-591). The ideas set in motion by them can never perish and are bound to influence the Afghans in the long run. The women of Japan are the most progressive minded in the East and thousands of Japanese women, working in factories are organizing themselves into Women's Trade Unions. Even in the administration of the temples, the Japanese women have gained a voice because the Buddhist priests have removed all sex disabilities and have allowed them the right to participate in all the details of temple worship.

It is a happy sign of the time that the Indian women have already attained the power of national expression. The grant of franchise to Indian women has made it possible for them to agitate for further political rights, to secure greater educational facilities and to obtain more social amenities and to remove all kinds of disabilities standing in their way. Indian women have began to ask for better inheritance laws and are agitating for the abolition of unequal civil laws. They are demanding divorce laws even. In fact a bill to provide better inheritance laws is being drafted by Rai Saheb Harbilas Sarda while a Divorce Bill is being sponsored by Sir Hari Singh Gour. As regards legislation in social matters, the government is making a fetish of its policy of non-intervention and the orthodox people are making capital out of it. Huge social injustices are perpetrated thereby. It is the primary duty of an enlightened government to assist in the inauguration of all healthy reforms.

Friends, in concluding, I wish to appeal to you to think in terms of the country as a whole, to set aside personal considerations and to work

for the common weal. Never forget for a moment that all of you have a part to play, whether big or small in the great work of nation building. And in a spirit of selfless sacrifice, consecrate your strength, energy and capacity for the fulfillment of the noble task. May you all march forward with a fearless mind on the road taken by heroes and leave the shadows of the past far far behind you.

- *Revolt*, 14 July 1929

Women's Social Conference Resolutions

We give below the resolutions passed at the 4th Madras Constituent Conference of Women on Education and Social Reform held on the 16th and 17th November at "Wellington," Madras, under the presidency of Mrs. Srinivasa Iyangar:

1. This Conference of Women thanks Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda for his patriotic labour in the cause of Indian womanhood and expresses its gratitude to the Government and to all those who gave their wholehearted support to such a humanitarian measure as the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

2. This meeting while emphatically condemning the devitalizing custom of allowing immature girls to become mothers demands that the legal age of marriage for girls be made 16 and for boys 21 and requests Sir Hari Singh Gour to amend his Bill which is now before the Asembly in accordance with the Report of the Age of Consent Committee.

3. This Conference calls on the Government to establish system of compulsory registration of births and marriages throughout the country as an essential condition for enforcing the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

4. This Conference calls on women to start Vigilance Committees throughout the country to help in carrying out the Act.

5. This Conference condemns the sordid custom of buying bridegrooms for girls.

6. This meeting believes that in the interest of the physique of the nation all schemes for promoting the welfare of expectant and

nursing mothers should be the first charge on Public Finance. Legislative enactments like the Maternity and Child Welfare Acts of other countries should be passed in India as soon as possible.

7. The meeting condemns the custom of enforced seclusion of women known as the purdah system and entreats all Hindus and Mahomedans who observe the custom to abolish it immediately.

8. This Conference asserts its emphatic adherence to the principle of civic equality for men and women and strongly recommends the abolition of all inequalities in the matter of marriage laws and rights of adoption and guardianship of children and inheritance of property.

9. This Conference of women demands that there should be the same standard of sex morality for men and women; women claim equal rights of legal separation and demand the introduction of an equal divorce law for both men and women.

10. This Conference of women strongly condemns the continuation of the Devadasi system in the Hindu Temples and appeals to the Government, to the Hindu Religious Endowment Board, to the temple committees and to the trustees, to prohibit the ceremony of dedication of minor or major girls within the premises of any temple or of any other place of worship and accords its whole hearted support to the Prevention of Dedications Bill by Dr. (Mrs) S. Muthulakshmi Reddi.

11. This conference of women calls upon the local legislature and the Government to enact the Brothel Bill into law on the lines drafted by the Madras Vigilance Association, with ample provision by the State for the moral and mental training of the minor girls up to the age of 21 on the lines of the Madras Borstal School system.

12. This Conference of women calls upon the local legislature and the Government to amend the Madras Children's Act in the light of legislation that exits in other provinces and in other civilized countries for the protection of children and minor girls and strongly urges that the Madras Children's Aid Society and other certified

schools in the presidency should be liberally financed, that a children's court should be immediately established and experienced trained women officers should be appointed by the Government to supervise the girls' homes.

13. (*a*) This meeting urges the need for women to organize women's institutes in the districts and villages of this presidency on the model of the Saroj Nalini Dutt Association in Bengal, and calls upon the existing women's association in the muffasill to open under their auspices, industrial and educational classes for the benefit of the local women and to appoint a committee of women social workers in Madras to give advice and guidance to mufassil women in organizing such institution.

    (*b*) This conference of women calls upon every woman to realise her responsibility to society by undertaking some form of social service such as helping the maternity and child welfare schemes, visiting hospitals, orphanages and prisons, doing honorary educational work, girl guiding, rescue work and suppression of brothels.

14. This conference views with great apprehensions the continuation of the practice of untouchability in India and exhorts Hindus of all classes to remove all restrictions imposed upon the so-called "untouchables" in the matter of admission to schools and hotels, use of public roads, wells, tanks and choultries, and entry into places of worship and thus to bring about a greater solidarity in Hindu society ; and it pledges its full support to such classes for all proper efforts made by them to get rid of these disabilities.

15. This meeting demands that children under 14 should not be employed in factories and workshop, that hours of work for children over 14, and for expectant and nursing mothers should be limited and that schools, crèche, and welfare centers for the children of the labourers should be provided by the employers.

16. This conference views with satisfaction the growth of public opinion in favour of total abstinence and prohibition and is of opinion that the time is ripe for legislation prohibiting the import, manufacture

and sale of liquor and of all intoxicating drugs.

17. This conference of women calls upon the organized political parties to put up women candidates at each election.

18. This conference of women of Madras calls upon Central Government and the Provincial Governments to nominate women to the Assembly and the Councils and to reserve a proportionate number of seats for women representatives in the municipal councils and local boards and to resort to nominations only till the District Municipal Act and Local Boards Act are suitably amended.

19. As women are the natural preservers of life, the women of India calls upon all the peoples and governments of the world and particularly the Government of India to outlaw war to promote unity and to maintain peace.

- *Revolt*, 24 November 1929

5 COUNTERING CRITICS

Mr. Gandhi's Wavering Reply

Our readers may have read Mr. Gandhi's reply to a correspondent who seeks his advice on the steps to be taken about his miserable sister driven out from her debaucherous (sic) and dissipated husband (*see above pp. 419-421*). The poor girl is said to have been "whipped and ill-treated by the rake who has no sense of honour. She was tied to a post to compel her to witness his debaucheries". The correspondent concludes his pathetic letter with a painful but pertinent remark on Hinduism.

He says, "this is one of the most shameful aspects of Hinduism, where women is left entirely at the mercy of man and has no rights and privileges. If a man chooses to be cruel and heartless there is no remedy left to the unfortunate woman. The man may go on making random alliances, and not a little finger can be raised against him; but a woman once married is at the utter mercy of her lord. Thousands of such women are groaning and weeping. As long as Hinduism is not purged of these and such like evils, can there be any hope of progress?" The writer's observation on Hinduism has stirred the Mahatma.

The protagonist of the Hindu religion, a role which Mr. Gandhi is actively playing after his severance from Indian politics, has a "prophetic" way of concealing the ignominious principles in HIS religion. He would rather twist his words to convey his vague ideas than willingly expose the iniquities of a dead phantom, euphemistically, called Hinduism. Mr. Gandhi says, "His (correspondent) condemnation of Hinduism, though pardonable under intense irritation, is based on hysterical generalisation from an isolated instance. For millions of Hindu wives live in perfect peace and are queens in their own homes. They exercise an authority over their husbands which any woman would envy".

Mr. Gandhi is so overwhelmed by his appreciation of his religion that it utterly blinds his eyes to his erroneous remarks which are contrary to facts. The correspondent's "hysterical generalisation from an isolated instance", is not however as bad and misleading as Mr. Gandhi's hysterical appreciation of an isolated religion. His remark about the Hindu wives being the "queens in their own homes," shows how he has not studied the masses of India. A Sabarmati Rishi under his Brahmin-bodyguards cannot judge the conditions outside. And we cannot but pity a man in his intellectual fetters.

"Queens in their homes!" Verily. A Suttee-sanctioning religion will certainly make queens! "Millions live in perfect peace." Certainly, they cannot but. About 7 millions of "untouchables" and an equal number of young widows also live in peace! Do they not? That is the greatness of our religion. It has made its adherents live always "in perfect peace." The "queens" of India are more in the imagination of the well-meaning writer than in actuality. While appreciating Mr. Gandhi's rosy view of the Hindu religion, we regret his deliberate attempts to hide the truth.

On the same point Mr. Gandhi proceeds "The case of cruelty brought to light by the correspondent is an illustration not of the evil in Hinduism, but of the evil in human nature which has been known to express itself under all climes and among people professing different faiths of the world... It is therefore in the interest of reform for reformers to avoid hysterics and exaggerations".

With due deference to the Mahatma's knowledge of human nature, a cloak under which he often wishes to hide himself, we cannot refrain from pointing out the special feature of the "human nature" in India. "Human nature" in its philosophic aspect or in its psychological standpoint may be the same "under all climes, among all people"; but not so in practicality. "Human nature" in other countries does not allow enforced widowhood. "Human nature" elsewhere does not recognise untouchability and unapproachability. "Human nature" outside does not require Devadasis for its gods. We need not tell Mr.Gandhi that a girl in any other country under the above circumstances would not wait to receive a reply through her brother. There is the difference in "human nature". Mr. Gandhi's advice to reformers, "to avoid hysterics and exaggerations" may be a soothing answer to his disciples at the Ashram, or a source of solace to his pious heart but never to the dynamic minds of the present generation.

"The remedy", he says, "lies not through the law, but through the true education of women and through cultivating public opinion against unmanly conduct on the part of husbands". That is again contrary to experience! The so-called eduction, Mr.Gandhi is aware, has not turned a wit the intelligentsia of the land, who form the foremost in opposing the Child Marriage Bill. Education did not stop the Suttee; it was only the law. Education did not stop burglary; it was the British Law. It is not education that forbids the committing of rape; it is the threatening sword of law. Therefore we are not able to understand what makes

Mr.Gandhi throw the power of law to the background and dwell upon the oft-mentioned "education," and "public opinion." Then we come to Mr. Gandhi's fantastical remark, "she may therefore without breaking the legal tie live apart from her husband's roof and feel as if she had never been married". We, with our plain thinking are not able to understand what exactly the Mahatma means. Where is the necessity for the legal tie, if she should "feel as if she had never been married"? This answer seems to be intended more for the superficial satisfaction of the readers of *Young India* than a sincere advice to the heartbroken girl. This is the sublimated portion of his vague reply to the correspondent.

The worst part of the answer lies in his advice on the question of the satisfaction of the sexual appetite. Mr. Gandhi says, "so far as I understand the correspondent's letter, the grievance is not that the wife cannot satisfy her sexual appetite". Indeed! A more easy way of cutting the Gordian knot, cannot be imagined by any other than Mr. Gandhi. In a former sentence, he has observed that "in the present instance the girl's parents are well able to support her." Then what else must be the intention of the correspondent in seeking the advice of Mr. Gandhi? Is it for a more solace through his paper?

Does Mr. Gandhi wish the correspondent to put in plain terms what anyone could so easily understand from the face of the letter? There is again the most amusing of his remarks, that "a woman whose marriage proves unhappy does not want to be married". We think it better to leave this aspect of the question for the readers to judge. If Mr. Gandhi really intended to convey any definite idea to the correspondent, he should either say plainly, that the girl should marry again or not. Instead of answering point black, he has tried his best to give a pure NOTHING after all his speculations and generalisations. We on our part would straightway advice the girl to choose and marry whomsoever she likes. Will Mr. Gandhi be more definite and open in his answers?

- *Revolt*, 13 October 1929

Friends and Foes

The orthodox Hindus of Bombay met on the 17th October with Sri Manmohan Das Ramji in the chair and protested against the decision of the Corporation of Bombay to observe no caste distinction in regard to the provision of pots for drinking water in Municipal schools. The

meeting expressed the opinion that such a decision was against the injunctions of the Hindu religion and controverted the holy doctrine of Varnashrama Dharma. The meeting appointed a committee to collect funds for instituting legal action against the corporation if necessary. As a protest against the corporation's action the stock exchange was kept closed for one day.

The orthodox Brahmins of Kumbakonam including Dewan Bahadur V. K. Ramanuja Achariar, Rao Bhadur N. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, Rao Sahib C. Lakshmi Varahava Iyengar, Rao Bahadur M. C. S. Ananthapadmnatha Rao and many other high officials and retired officials and pandits held a conference on the 21st and 22nd instants and unanimously decided that the shastras never allowed any betrothal after passing the age of twelve, that marriage should be preformed between eight and twelve and in no case after puberty, that there was no sanction in the shastras for the remarriage of widows and that to assert that there was no shastraic sanction for untouchability was an untrue and untenable statement.

We congratulate the Varnashramites of Bombay and Kumbakonam on the courageous fight they are putting up in defence of what they consider to be their religion. The honest Vydeeki is our friend. He is no pretender. He believes he is born big and he tells you so. He cannot reason; he will only quote. You can easily show him up. The moderates of India were not guilty of a single disservice to the cause of National freedom. They never assumed the role of heroes. They were out to beg which they did openly and in all humility. Unbending orthodoxy and obsequious moderatism openly oppose our movement. Their opposition is welcome. No good cause can be lost by straight attacks directly encountered. A trial of our prowess does but enhances our reputation.

Where then is the danger? Who is the real adversary? You cannot recognize him because he wears a mask. He defies description because he sticks at nothing. Is it social reform you discuss? Well, he is far too advanced for you; he denounces untouchability, enthuses for the freedom of women and is impatient to pull down the barriers of caste. He will move resolutions in the councils and congresses advocating equal opportunities for all. Is it his political views? You cannot imagine a greater patriot. He is out and out for complete Independence. He wants no sham Dyarchy. He is for consistent obstruction. His object is

to destroy the machinery of Government. He is the most thoroughgoing revolutionary walking the earth. But the moment you pay heed to his verbiage and trust that his words connote the real man you are undone. Collect your thoughts resist the flourish of his language and begin to watch his acts. Ah, the difference! You realize with painful surprise that the lip service to the cause of progress was but a disguised advocacy for reaction.

Let us illustrate our meaning. Mr. Sarda's bill is a measure calculated to protect the children of the country from being forced to enter into marital relationship without regard to their physical and mental well being. Marriage is a serious responsibility which should be entered into voluntarily by parties who realize its significance and are physically and mentally capable of discharging the onerous duties enjoined. The herding of immature children into matrimony by parents and guardians in accordance with blind tradition is an outrage which no civilized community should tolerate. A country may attain to political independence. But its freedom will not be worth a moment's purchase if its youth is kept enchained and miserable. The amount of support that Mr. Sarda's bill gets among our politicians is therefore a test of their Nationalism. The following are extracts from the statement by one of the leading advocates of 'Independence" for India, who is opposing the child marriage bill (1):

"That the Hindu society is not today all that it should be and that it needs reforming go without saying. I recognize fully the horrors of child widowhood and the difficulties of child motherhood. But any legislation which compels people to commit what they, sincerely and on reasonable grounds believe to be a gross sin will be resented throughout the country. I maintain that South Indian Brahmins have reasonable grounds to, and do sincerely believe, according to Parasara Smriti, which is the supreme authority for the Kaliyuga for them that they must marry their girls on their attaining their twelfth year, and that otherwise they commit a very heinous sin. In spite of many excrescences, marriage has to this day remained a sacrament with the Hindus. Once that conception is sought to be destroyed, and marriage becomes the thing of convenience that it is rapidly becoming in the west, I dread to think of the consequences to Hinduism and Hindu society".

This Independencewalla enthused for reform sheds tears for the plight of child widows and child mothers. But he enjoins you to marry your girls before they attain the age of twelve if you are to escape sins leading

to hell fires. On pain of destroying your religion he tells you not to liberalise the law of marriage, for marriage is sacrament, a samskara. A little attention to such overt acts of "Nationalists" of this stamp, will penetrate the veneer of wordy froth and discover the support which they are rendering to the perpetuation of the most horrid tyrannies. The wordy extremist is the real opponent of progress in our country. That easy patriotism which runs to limitless extremism in words and points to low intrigues for self-aggrandisement in acts stultifies all dynamic endeavor towards National freedom.

- *Revolt,* 7 November 1928

Women's Conference and *Justice*

The proceedings of the Women's conference held during last week and the resolutions passed there have created in us a feeling of gratification and ease at a time when we are fighting single handed, the reactionary forces of orthodoxy and obscurantism. While we are plunged in ecstasy at the signs of advancement made by our women, a section of the press is devoting its columns to an adverse criticism of the resolutions passed at the Conference. It is painful to record that our Non-Brahmin Contemporary has also joined the fray. The criticism of the *Justice* on the resolutions referring to the question of divorce has not only taken us by surprise but also shocked us to a little extent.

We remember the occasion when the *Justice* attacked us for passing the same resolution at the First Self–respect Conference at Chingleput. It ran that "marriage should be terminable at the will of either party and that no restrictions be placed on remarriage". This and similar resolutions on the right of women were branded by the press, as "most revolutionary" and "anti-religious". Bur we had to fight it out single handed, that is to say, without the declared support of those for whose direct benefit the resolutions were intended; and fight we did.

Now, after an interval of nearly a year, the Women's Conference has given us an impetus through their emphatic resolutions proposed and seconded by the most cultured and public spirited women of the country. Whereas even the *Hindu,* the *Swarajya* and other orthodox papers did not commit themselves to any definite opinion on the resolutions that seem to be objectionable, it is a pity that our "Democratic Daily" of South India has launched upon an attack on the important resolutions and has also made itself bold enough to come

forward with wonderful reflections and peculiar generalizations.

The *Justice* feels "that the advocates of women's emancipation have not understood the position of women rightly in this country and by tending to create a separate caste, a caste of women, are alienating the sympathies of all well wishers of the causes and making it difficult where it as plain and smooth sailing at one time. It is unfortunate that women's movement in most provinces in not in the hands of the natural leaders. The time is not yet ripe when those who, by education, talents and other equipments, would naturally come forward to give a lead to women, are in a position to do so. The result is that occasionally wrong and incorrect lead is given and the cause suffers thereby." We know our readers would not believe their eyes when they see that the opinion is that of a "Democratic Daily." For we ourselves could not believe our sense of perception and understanding when we read it in the leading columns of a Non-Brahmin Daily.

We do not quite understand how the *Justice* has worked itself up into such a passion and fury over a question which needs no other justification or evidence than its own existence. Our women are charged by our contemporary for "creating a separate caste, and alienating the sympathies of the well-wishers." That is a problem over which we including our contemporary have wasted already more shots than necessary. How do we, the Self-respecters or the Justicites justify a separate organization for our cause? How will the *Justice* answer the question of its supporting communal organizations? What are we, we ask, to quote Shastras for and against the marriageable age for girls? That is why, we are bordering on 12 and 14, while we all know what they will fix if it is left to themselves. The *Justice* seems to be more fond of "Plain and smooth sailing" than any right of justice. An all round "democracy" for which the *Justice* stands, cannot be always "plain and smooth sailing". Its pitiable lament for the absence of "natural leaders," and the consequent "wrong and incorrect lead" is more intended as a precautionary measure for its opinion which is to come later, than any expression of the real state of affairs.

Let us see what our contemporary says, "The spectacular resolution claiming that there should be the same standard of morality for women as for men, that women should be given the rights of legal separation, and demanding an equal law of divorce with men, is in the first place most unhappily worded". As regards the pleas for the same standard of

sex morality, the *Justice* insists on a stricter code of ethics and morality for the stronger sex."

The first and the main issue is who is to decide and how to decide which the stronger sex is, and which is the weaker? Then how can the *Justice* proceed on a code of morality or ethics upon an assumption which is fundamentally objectionable? We are sure that the *Justice* will live to see the contrary truth in the nearest future. "Again," complains our contemporary, "the plea for a divorce law cuts at the very root of the idea which has been inculcated for thousands of years with reference to the solemnity of marriage and the obligation of the marital state." We are sorry to put ourselves in a position to differ from our friend on so fundamental and rudimentary questions as this. We regret the new role taken up by our contemporary in utter defiance of the noble and enlightened spirit for which it stands. "Ideas inculcated for thousands of year!" Verily, Who inculcated them? And for whom?

Let the *Justice* listen to what Mrs. Venkatasubba Rao, the President of the Reception Committee, says on the question: "We are no longer leaving it to men to decide what is best for us. The downtrodden condition of women all over the world is due to the fact that they are governed by man made laws."

Then again, the *Justice* "ventures to think that the very idea of divorce will be absolutely repugnant to millions of our women all over the country, and that the loathsome suggestion would be repudiated by them as strongly as possible." This venturesome announcement does not become a paper like the *Justice.* If our contemporary is bent upon eschewing what all is "repugnant to millions" and echoing only wholesome sentiments, we are sorry it courts favour and popularity more than truth and justice. Characterising the resolution as "a loathsome suggestion" and predicting a "strong repudiation" of it by the public are not the methods that should be adopted by a fair-minded exponent of the cause of social reform.

The worst, the most unexpected and greatly disappointing part of the criticism lies in one of its concluding sentences, which says, "While therefore, the line of advance should have been to try to keep to the ideal of the Hindu Shastras, it is a great pity that some advanced women, in their caution-less zeal for reform and for approximating to what they consider Western standards, should have raised such issues." We very much pity the pitiable plight of our contemporary which, being

unable to justify its standpoint from any rational or human point of view, has pushed itself into the inevitable rut of the "Hindu Shastras" which is both unbecoming and cruel on the part of a "democratic" paper." Has it come to this?" We are forced to ask in disappointment. We want to know why the *Justice* which quotes Shastras against the rights of women should fight with girded loins against those who quote the same Shastras in favor of the Varnashrama Dharma, the Devadasi institution, early marriage and other countless evils in our society! It is not only unfair but most cruel on the part of reformers if they utilize their power, intellect and prestige to grind their own axes. Let us not in our selfishness, allow womanhood to exclaim in derision, "After all, this is the state of *Man*,"

- ***Revolt***, 24 November 1929

Notes to 5

1 The reference here is to S. Satyamurti, who consistently opposed all efforts at social reform with regard to women's status. (See above note 6, p. 499)

Part IV

Self-respect and Atheism

The Self-respect movement comprised a substantial number of atheists and freethinkers. They subjected religious dogma, the power of priests and the prevalence of obscurantist customs in the practice of all faiths to a penetrative social and political critique. Their atheism possessed an energetic and satiric charge: trained as it was against faith that appeared a travesty of reason as well as of human decency. Thus, the self-respecters objected as much to the use of religion to retain and legitimize hierarchies of caste, class and privilege, as they did to its irrationality.

Atheist arguments were utilized in several contexts: to advance a critique of Congress nationalism that appeared in concord with unbending orthodoxy; to argue for and re-define the right of adi dravidas to temple entry, as an essentially public and civil right; to mount an unrelenting critique of those who set themselves up as opponents of marriage reform and women's equality; and finally to interrogate the truth claims of all religions in the Indian context. Significantly, atheism was understood not in the limiting sense of a negative doctrine, but also as an idea whose time had come. Thus, *Revolt* featured regular articles on religious reform in Kemal Pasha's Turkey and Amir Amanullah's Afghanistan. It wrote glowingly of the achievements of the Soviet State. In each of these instances, self-respecters endorsed what appeared to them important moments in the progress of secularism: the separation of the powers of state and church, the abolition of priestly privilege and the power of religious institutions and reform of marriage laws.

Revolt's atheism was characteristically home-grown: it took its cues from world-wide debates in radical rationalism and freethought but adapted them brilliantly to explain and illumine conditions in the Indian sub-continent. *Revolt* was also encouraged by the fact that rationalists elsewhere were looking to Indian radicals to do their best by a society that was described as a 'slumbering giant' which had to be woken up to the day of reason. *Revolt's* writers (and readers) were also interested in the principles invoked by rationalists and freethinkers – they followed these debates keenly, and re-published articles from a number of

freethought journals, including *The Rationalist*, *The Truthseeker* and the tracts of the London-based Rationalist Press Association.

The first section of this selection comprises articles that argue *Revolt*'s case for atheism. The arguments are largely ethical in origin. Secularism is also debated, especially in those essays that interrogate the politics and wisdom of religious instruction in schools. S. Guruswami's essays on Hindu itihasas and puranas, adapted from Tamil texts published in the Self-respect weekly, *Kudiarasu*, savagely funny and profoundly argued, are featured in this section as well. Included here is a collection of 'Atheist Miscellany' containing humorous fragments and short essays on the oddities of belief.

The second section contains essays that engage with the relationship between faith, reason, law and citizenship. Here are articles on religious and political reforms in Afghanistan and Turkey, and the abolition of religion in the erstwhile Soviet Union. They rehearse a set of arguments that continues to haunt us, as we continue to struggle with public opinion, custom, and legal reform with respect to religious customs in our own time and contexts. Significantly, these arguments were debated at that time in societies that resolved them with surprisingly critical alacrity. For self-respecters this manner of resolving the vexed question of faith was highly attractive, though they were also aware of the pitfalls of state intervention in matters of faith. In fact, they were convinced even then of the need to not merely enact State legislation to transform social attitudes, but to actually persuade civil society to think critically.

The third and fourth sections are compact: the one comprises essays on the problematic question of Eugenics (see also The Women's Question for more articles on birth-control and eugenics). The other features select articles by rationalist radicals from across the Anglo-American world, whose writings featured prominently in *Revolt*: the essays that examine the religious right in the USA and Britain remind us that these are battles that rationalists continue to fight.

1 THE ARGUMENT FOR ATHEISM

1.1 Debating Atheism and Nationalism

Spirituality

Mr. Adam Gowans Whyte writing in the "Rationalist Annual" for 1928 says the following glowing tribute to the Hindu religion.

"No one will dispute the high status of the Hindu religion. It is ancient – so ancient that Christianity is in comparison but a cult of yesterday. It has a mythology more elaborate, more fantastic, than that of any other faith. It controls the daily lives of over two hundred millions of people; and above all, its pilgrims have advanced further along the path of mysticism than the most ambitious adepts of Western religion can claim. The Hindu, in short has been a specialist in spirituality for thousands of years. By means of fasting, prayer, meditation, and other spiritual exercise he raises himself to a level of spiritual ecstasy where the things of earth are lost in the shining haze of the eternal. Even our Christian mystics, who are a kind of Upper Ten in our religious society, have a deep respect for the occult Wisdom of the East. We ought to find, therefore, in the Hindu community very plain proofs of the benefits of spiritual rule. Here is a multitude governed by the very antithesis of that "materialism" which we are constantly reminded, will curse the world when religion ceases to dominate. Let us then examine the fruits of the tree that has been flourishing for so many centuries."

Mr. Whyte proceeds to examine our social and religious institutions which are responsible for our child widows and our "untouchables" and comes to the following remarkable conclusion:-

Hinduism "is a spiritual domination which condemns a whole people to ignorance, misery, cruelty and disease. The founders of Hinduism, guided by the light that never was on land or sea, and keeping their gaze upon the ineffable and the infinite, developed a code which controls the daily lives of every man and woman from the cradle to the funeral pyre. This code carries with it the strongest form of sanction for the multitude – a spiritual sanction; and *against that invisible power the British administration, in common with the native reformer, is almost helpless.* The people, believing and obeying as the faithful are expected to do,

demonstrate that effects of their supernatural government with a thorough-ness which is little short of appalling."

We do not agree with the latter conclusion of Mr. Whyte contained in the words we have italicized. Our charge against the British administration is not so much that it has drained the economic resources of the country but that it has connived at the perpetuation and accentuation of the religious thralldom of the people by adopting the policy of "religious neutrality". Armed with the powers and the resources of government, the British administrators have been sitting with folded hands allowing priestcraft to spoliate a whole Nation. Having accepted the responsibility of governing a great country, it is idle to pretend helplessness. We consider the accusation against the "native reformer" is quite unfair. The Indian reformer has proved ineffective because he does not command political power; neither do those who have the power co-operate with him. No government which gloats on its "religious neutrality" can lead a Nation on the onward path of progress. Happily the reformer in India has ceased to look forward to government support and is already among the people trying to shake them out of their "spiritual" slumber. We heartily endorse the works of Mr. Aldous Huxley who in *Jesting Pilate* says:

"To my mind, spirituality is the primal curse of India and the cause of her misfortunes. A little less spirituality and the Indians would now be free – free from foreign domination and the tyranny of their own prejudices and traditions. There would be less dirt and more food".

- *Revolt*, 7 November 1928

Revolt Against Religion

Reason Vs. Blind Faith

(Prof. Joshi)

"Modern Collegemen have revolted against the old traditions, discarded creed as a useless crutch, and find more religious satisfaction in reason than in blind faith."

(That is the undergraduate, as Prof. Samuel Lucas Joshi depicts him in an article in the New York "Evening Post". Professor Joshi was formerly of the University of Madras and now holds the chair in Comparative Religion at Darmouth, United States. He has had wide experience in

Asia, Europe and America. After obtaining a Master of Arts degree at Columbia in 1905 he returned to India to teach and become a Professor of English Literature at Baroda college. In 1922 he received an appointment as the first Exchange Professor from India on the Carnegie Foundation to the United States which he held for two years. His parents were Brahmin converts to Christianity and had forty generations of the priesthood behind them, a fact which leads him to comment, we read in 'The Evening Post': "I was privileged to add to this inheritance by being educated in a Moslem College and trained in the traditions of the Christian Church". Professor Joshi is a Hindu Christian and a member of the Anglican Church.)

Professor Joshi writes that a diversity of opinion exists among the undergraduates regarding the need of religion as being vital to modern life, but the majority of college-men, while acknowledging the need of man's spiritual regeneration have determined never again to return to the traditional forms of Christian theology.

"They sense the need of a metaphysical and scientific background on which the superstructure of religious theory and practice should be built."

At the end of the last academic year he asked his class on comparative religion to write papers frankly expressing their opinions on religion, and he selected some extracts as typifying the attitude of the American under-graduate toward religion today:

"If I were to set down in one sentence, my conception of God, the universe and religion in general, it would be in accordance with the more or less pantheistic view namely, the identification of God, with the universe and the laws of nature. That God would be an impartial creator impervious to prayer and sacrifice and unapproachable by bribes of any sort. In short, man's salvation would lie solely within himself and would not be the special dispensation of any God or hierarchy of gods.

"I would subscribe to no formulated creed or dogma, guiding my life entirely within myself. I would accept no theology and attend no Church since these factors do not fit in with my scheme of life. Creed for me would take the form of working in accord with the laws of nature and my fellow man. The sociological aspect of welfare also enters in here – a utilitarian phrase, "The greatest good for the greatest number."

Here, on the other hand, there are widely different points of view as for instance:

"'God' is merely a vague term for the unchanging laws of nature, and he who by prayers and sacrifices expects to interfere with these laws is surely on the highway to insanity. Perfection can be reached only by men working along with his fellows intelligently."

"All religions are based on certain hypothetical postulates, and it is idle to sit in judgment on any as long as they bring forth the fruit of good conduct and stand the pragmatic test."

"The Buddhist view that every man must exercise aright his free will and become the master of his own fate under the law of Karma is to me the most sensible idea of salvation ever known."

"Know Thyself" is the best summary of religion given by India and Greece to the world. The attainment of happiness to the fullest extent by all races should be the aim of true religion. I believe the greatest satisfactions of life do not come merely from pecuniary gain but by the due recognition of the spiritual element in man and the universe. I see nothing beyond the grave. I would like to believe in no personal God nor in the immortality of the soul."

"If an inordinate desire to acquire wealth dominates our life we become less capable to love our neighbours as ourselves. The ethics of individual self-realisation appeal to me as a better type of religion (than) mechanical prayers in congregational worship. Truly religious men must learn to depend more on the authority of experience and reason than the authority of the Church or the Scriptures."

"None of the Semite religions has ever appealed to me. They have no satisfactory metaphysical background so essential to the rational understanding of religion. Buddha never wasted time and energy in speculating on the nature of God, but in a pre-eminently practical way organized a religious movement which seems to appeal both to the scientists and the philosopher."

"The Christian view that you must secure your salvation by placing your faith in the merits of the crucifixion is suggestive of mental indolence and lacks the dynamic moral energy of Buddhism, which tells every man to work out his own salvation."

"As we are unconsciously encouraging law breaking and hypocrisy through half-baked attempts to enforce prohibition, so the ministers

of churches are often forced to be preaching doctrines in which they have ceased to believe and encouraging hypocrisy. I follow Christ in regarding hypocrisy as the greatest sin."

– *Revolt*, 5 June 1929

What is Religion?

Apart from theoretical discussions regarding metaphysical problems, writes Dr. Phil in *The Bombay Chronicle*, let us examine what different typical individuals in our country, belonging to different cultural and social strata understand as the dictates of their respective religions.

A typical Hindu worker or farmer supposes that God resides in various images of metal or stone; that he lives at special places, called places of pilgrimage: that a cow is a sacred animal and that a buffalo (although it gives more and better milk) is not!; that girls ought to be married when they are eight years or even younger; that god can be bribed or coerced into yielding favours (hence the necessity of vows and offerings); that he must not touch certain people and that intermarriages between the various castes is a sin; that wearing of a tuft of hair or a sacred thread is necessary to the salvation, etc., etc.

Well, if this is his religion, is it well worth keeping it?

The same worker or farmer, it he is a Mussalman, will have other ideas about religion. He will suppose that a woman should never show her face except to her nearest relatives; that a man can marry four wives and have an unlimited number of mistresses; that he should go on continuously spitting on the ground during the month of Ramazan as even the swallowing of saliva is as sin, that a cow must be led through the streets and then killed in the name of religion; that no music be played in front of a place of worship; that drinking of alcohol is a sin; that when a few friends gather together they must eat from the same vessel irrespective of hygienic consideration etc.

I repeat, are these things worthwhile keeping?

A typical middle class Hindu will not be very much different from his uneducated brother. He will still go to temples and pray: pay half an anna to a man to make him feed his own cow and thus secure a bit of *Punya (virtue – editors)*; he will say that god is present everywhere and immediately make plans to go to Nasik so as to be able to see him; he will say that all human beings are children of God and therefore, brothers

and then in the very next moment abuse an untouchable for having come too near; he will say that man's position depends on his character and not on his birth, and in the next moment refuse to give his support to the abolition of caste; he will believe that eating onions during four months of the year is a sin; he will believe that not wearing a sacred thread will lead straight to hell. Can anyone tell me which of these deserves the high sounding names given to religion?

Even the so called highly educated classes are not clear about what they understand under religion. Their god being all- powerful still persists in retaining misery in this world. Being all merciful, he still refuses to see that his children are not appreciating the vast benefits of famines, plagues and earthquakes. Knowing so many details about their god, these innocent children do not however, know what this god without beginning and without end was doing before he created this universe of ours: how after having foreseen what is going to happen (he might have done so, for he sees all) he did not do anything too prevent it …!

In an academical discussion about the necessity or otherwise of religion, everybody is up in arms against the opponent of religion. But when it comes to practice, that is what religion means. It means fights between touchable and untouchables, Hindus and Mussalmans, Brahmans and Non Brahmans, Arya Samajists and Sanatanists, Shias and Sunnis and what not. One religion asks its followers to keep a beard, another a tuft of hair at the back of the head and a third forbids its followers to shave or cut the hair on body, head or face. If god is present everywhere, what is the necessity of temples? And if at all they are necessary, why should they be at particular places only? Once a temple or a mosque is situated at a particular place, no matter what that place is required for it cannot be removed. Thus in most Indian cities, religion is serving as a traffic obstructor as a spoiler of natural beauty, as an opponent of public good.

Religion as practiced is poisoning our public life in India and it is high time that all leaders unite in condemning these practices. If at all India is to get freedom. It cannot expect to live a life behind closed doors. It must come out before the world and live out its life like every other nation. And while other people are discussing birth control, divorce, free love, socialism and world brotherhood, we are holding our "Catholic" medical congress, "Muslim" educational conferences and

"All India" Santa Cruz conferences of people wearing white coats and black caps.

If at all anybody wants religion, it should be a private affair of his own and it would be a crime to bring it out of his doors.

When shall we begin to see that?

– *Revolt*, 23 June 1929

What Will You Put In Its Place?

Next to the question "Who made everything?" the one oftenest hurled by religionists against whoever undertakes to convince them of the falsity of their beliefs is "What will you put in its place?" An answer satisfactory to a rational person is easily given, but it seems almost impossible to silence a believer who wants a *substitute* for that which gives him comfort, as he has been taught to affirm, even though he may be virtually forced to concede that observed facts are against his belief.

Straightforward explanations of the truth of the situation, humorous illustrations of the issues involved, and sarcastic treatment of the fallacy at the back of the question should all be employed in replying to this old objection. Should they fail to effect upon the questioner they will most likely have an influence, when used before an audience, upon open-minded seekers after truth. If used in argument with the opponent only, one may escape boredom somewhat by noting his reactions to various replies.

The man who asks for a substitute should be informed that the scientific facts disproving supernaturalism may themselves be considered a sufficient exchange for the old false belief. Handling the matter from a slightly different angle, the anti-religionist may point out that when ideas become obsolescent, it is not necessary that something be given instead.

The following replies are appropriate:

When a physician cures a man of disease, he does not give him another disease. If the opponent counters by saying that the physician gives the man health instead, the reply should be that the anti-religionists merely seek to the restore people to reason. The words of Voltaire are to the point. "What! I rescue you from beast that is about to devour you, and

you ask me what I will give you in its place".

If the champion of religion lives in a large city, he should be referred to the classified telephone directory, where under the heading 'wreckers' he will find listed the names of individuals and concerns engaged exclusively in tearing down condemned buildings. The system of thought known as religion has been condemned by the conscience of the majority of educated, civilized persons and must be removed; nor is it necessary that the wrecker should consider what is to be put in its place. It is enough that the structure has been condemned. Before a new one can be erected, the old must be demolished.

Should the religionist then restate his objection, as he is very likely to do, by accusing his would-be-emancipator of being 'purely destructive', it would be well to inquire of him why he does not launch a campaign against wrecking companies. The analogy is perfect, but the emotionally warped minds of the Faithful are so imperfect and in general so biased against even the words 'destructive' and 'tearing down' and prejudiced in favor of 'constructive' and similar terms, that frequently the introduction of the illustration of wrecking seems to produce an effect opposite to the one intended. Religions are ruled by emotion chiefly. The connotations of a word have more weight with them than has its denotation. Not the strict meaning but the associations impress them more. Whoever in interested in ridding the world of religious superstition should always have ready replies to the stock objections of the opposition. It is suggested that anti-religionists cut out and keep the replies given above and add to them from time to time, so that they will never be at a loss how to reply to what will you put in its place?

- *Revolt*, 28 July 1929

Why Preach Atheism?

I

An esteemed correspondent writes to us: "I have seen in 'The Revolt' continuous references to favour atheism and ridiculous descriptions of God, and have wondered how far, this can be useful to the movement which you have so dear to heart".

This doubt has been raised on various occasions by many of our friends, some of whom are even our co-workers. We are therefore bound to tell them candidly that we are not quite unaware of the probable effects

that would be produced by the rational writing that are published in our journal. As a matter of fact we realize it would be a vain pursuit to unnecessarily launch a campaign against god. Nor is it our aim to waste the precious life of humanity in disputing over the existence of god. Our correspondent rightly doubts the usefulness of atheism in the propagation of our movement. Aspects of social reconstruction or social revolution, to put it more accurately have been dwelt upon in the past by many well-wishers of our country from the days of that illustrious reformer Ramanuj down to Swami Vivekananda and a host of others before and after, the task of reforming our society has been attempted not with any signal success. It was due to what? Not to the want of sincerity or capacity in them. For, not one of those ardent reformers lacked in any of the qualities that are necessary for taking up the work of reform. It is hard to find a better worker than Gokhale, a greater enthusiast than Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, a cleverer man than Ram Mohan Roy or a nobler soul than Swami Vivekananda. If these reformers have failed to produce any lasting effect on our society it is due to their fearful attitude towards the roots of opposition. They laid the axe at the branch, instead of at the root of evil.

There is no need to inform our correspondent that the real enemy of social reform is orthodoxy. The correspondent seems to sympathise with all other aspects of our movement except those which relate to god.He belongs to a group of workers which is out to destroy caste root and branch. He proposes to achieve this end by encouraging inter caste marriages and inter dining.These two are objected to by orthodoxy, which is in turn backed up by religion. When the orthodox sections of our country raise their alarm from their platform of religion, we are naturally led to place our hands at their very foundation. When we and our correspondent try to efface the sin of untouchablity, the privileged sections of the land quote religion in their favour. If we attack religion they take shelter under god and frighten us with hell-fire. God, religion and society are so intermingled. God is the centre pole which stands supported by strings of religion, customs, and superstitions tied round it. When once we begin to rub our commonsense against the strings it is no wonder they give way. And then naturally the pole shakes, but our intention is not to pull down the pole.

Many obstacles are thrown on our way in our onward march to the full realization of our ideal. Among such obstacles are god and religion. Reformers of the past feared to face either of these, because they dreaded

to revolutionize the minds of the people. But we care more for our achievement than the sacredness of names attached to our obstacles. That is why we have decided to make the people think and think patiently for themselves. Unless the people cultivate a rational method of thinking there is no possibility of achieving any fruitful results. When once the people begin to think for themselves then there is the sight of progress. The conception of god does not appeal to rational mind. All reformers should be fearless if they should set humanity right. If they should be fearless they must necessarily be free thinkers. And all freethinkers without exception are lovers of humanity. We know full well that the conception of god very much stands on the way of a fearless approach towards social and religions reform. "If man cannot be reasoned out of a thing he must be ridiculed out of it". Our references in favour of atheism, are therefore made with a view to set the people thinking and not to wound the tender susceptibilities of the theists. We shall examine other aspects of our correspondent's doubts in our next article.

II

In our last article we pointed out the inseparable connection between god, religion and custom. Here we shall attempt to clear our correspondent's doubt whether such …references can be of any use in the propagation of our movement. We think it is needless to point out that "god" has been the creation of human mind, just as all religions dead and living were created by man. The very existence of crores of gods in India with their wives, concubines and children, go to prove the truth of the above statement. Religions come and religions go. Mankind is neither sorry for it, nor the worse or it. Similarly the gods. The conception of god has not only subdued man's power of thinking but has also adversely affected his material prosperity. It is why that profound thinker, John Stuart Mill remarked, that "god is a word not to express our ideas, but the want to them"

In India especially "God" and fatalism have crushed man's progress and are playing untold havoc in our society. To this may be ascribed the chief cause of the social and economical degeneration of our country. Reformed religions have tried on various occasions to right the many wrongs India was suffering from. Many have miserably failed, while many others disappeared themselves. Many an onslaught was made on Varnashrama Dharma, the bedrock of Hinduism, but in vain.

Religions, major and minor, associations big and small, Sangams old and new have all failed in reforming Hinduism. The reason was their fear to approach the desirability of the conception of god, which is so inextricably connected with society and its customs. The one man who did this was that venerable founder of Buddhism. Buddha could not have achieved that which he did, had he not boldly set at naught the conception of god. It was indeed a wise thing that Buddha first convinced his people of the "Let alone" theory of god before he set about his work of destroying caste. We want to know what our correspondent would say if our opponents were to cite the "holy" texts (supposed to be written by god or his messengers) in favour of caste system? We are seeing everyday how the Sanatanists and other privileged classes quote "god" or godliness in their favour and obstruct the... work of the reformers. Malavias quote "god" in favour of caste just as Ramachandras and Satyamurtis quote god in favour of child marriage and Devadasi institution. Naturally the illiterate masses of the country get bewildered when the devil quotes the scripture. Traders on god have multiplied. Shams in the name of the "Almighty" are increasing. Knavery in the name of supernaturalism is improving, "God" has done enough of ruin in the minds of our people. Is it not time for us to explain to our people that atheists and atheistic countries are none the worse for their disbelief in god? – nay, even better off than all other countries which are hanging on the tender string of god?

Lord Buddha the greatest and the most successful of the reformers has left us this amount of truth, that progress cannot be dreamt of unless humanity is purged out of the conception of god. "God" has interfered too much on our daily life and it is no wonder charlatans make use of it. It is easier to get rid of "god" than charlatans. We are sure our correspondent in his work of removing caste iniquity will come to realise, one day or the other, the necessity of approaching the question of god, even as our Lord Buddha did.

- *Revolt*, 4 and 11 August 1929

The Awakening Giant

(By E. W. Fliant, New Zealand) (1)

Far, far, away in the dim recesses of prehistoric ages we see and divine slow stirrings of the human intellect and the efforts of humans to more comfortably adapt themselves to the world in which they found

themselves. But this slow development of intellect carried with it a drawback which spread blight over the race for many centuries for as man learned to take note of the world and the wonders therein, he also learned to fear that which he so imperfectly understood. Coincident with this there arose out of the same rudiments of knowledge a realization on the part of some men that those fears, hopes and strivings of men could be used to benefit those who might be crafty and unscrupulous enough to make use of it. So there arose a priesthood battening upon man's ignorance and fears and with certain spasmodic outbursts through the ages, which the same priesthood has killed promptly in a more or less violent manner, this is the condition of man to this day.

Rome and more particularly Greece in our own time comparatively speaking, made steps forward in this respect but man's greatest enemy once more gained the upper hand and smothered these bright beginnings to a scientific and rational world. Down again settled the pall and man's noble efforts disappeared in a pool of blood and fire not to reappear till yesterday. Europe then gave rise to a skeptical spirit born of and allied to science which of itself was a legacy of that Grecian development before mentioned. Slowly painfully and in the face of determined opposition mankind gradually fought the good fight for "the best of all causes" today in our knowledge, education and comparative comfort and well-being we reap the fruits of these courageous efforts and it would be and is nothing more or less than treachery to their ideals and memory to shirk the fight or to slack in its prosecution.

The battle today is of course vastly different from that which our forefathers waged with their primitive weapons though we have as a result of their pioneer efforts an accumulation of knowledge which puts an altogether different complexion on the probable fortunes of the day, never before did such an array of fact and reason assail the world of the priest. Ideas fearfully held and arising out of half baked conceptions of the universe just little better than those of the orthodox could not be expected to stand long against the craft of a powerful priesthood, but there is one thing we possess today, which is absolutely deadly in its effects upon our traditional enemies. No theological conception of the universe or dogmatic evasion of a rational explanation there of with all its "clothed nonsense" can withstand the cold clear light of reason or knowledge. As those deadly rays have been invented

which wither and destroy anything upon which they fall, so knowledge blights and destroys the festering mass of priest conceived his (sic) when directed against it. The searchlight of reason illuminates the darkness and destroys fraud wherever found and so the days of the priest are numbered.

So it is that the splendid movement which enlightened Indians has started for the emancipation of their country from the thralldom of superstition bids fair to go on and on to its logical and desirable finality. Had the movement arisen, supposing that to be possible, in another age there would have been small chance of such efforts surviving the withering blasts, physical and vocal of the established priesthood? Today the dice is loaded against the forces of superstition and though we may witness varied fortunes for a time there can be no question of the ultimate victory by reason.

In no country in the world is the crying need of reform more urgent and nowhere will the fight prove harder than in India. This will be an added incentive to those stalwart spirits who are now doing the pioneering work in this mighty movement of liberation. No poor words suffice to describe and praise the spirit which animates those who lab our so unselfishly to liberate their fellow countrymen and country women from the strong-hold of organized superstition. Theirs is a work, an ideal and an endeavor which would do honors to the mighty mythical Gods of antiquity and when their valiant efforts are at last crowned with success, as they will eventually be, there will be no honour too high to do them justice while the greatest and most appropriate memorial to their greatness will be – a free enlightened and happy India.

- *Revolt*, 15 September 1929

Persecutions by Clergymen

(By R. Viswanathan)

The despair rising from the lack of strength to encounter the secrets of Nature is the basis of the belief in God and idol worship. Religious movements are collections of the notions created by the mental power of the rude and uncivilized people of times immemorial to make up for the inability of their minds to get into the secrets of the wonders performed by Nature. Therefore religions wholly depend upon the

ignorance and superstitions of mankind. To administer those religions are the clergymen. So the existence of the mighty power of clergymen over mankind depends upon their religions, which hang down from the belief in God, the basis of ignorance and superstition of the rude and wild men of ancient world. It shows how strongly clergymen stand in the way of knowledge or in other words, how greatly they try to destroy the building of scientists, whose unconquerable minds are always ready to take up the challenges which Nature holds out.

The persecutions of scientists by clergymen in the middle ages were extremely severe. Even the use of pen, ink or paper was prohibited by them. The clergymen, who were, as a rule steeped in orthodox conservative principles, extremely trembled of the fear, that new inventions shattered the faith of the people in God and Temple and shook the religious foundations. Roger Bacon who was the first man to chalk out a path, that by observation and experiment, striking discoveries could be made and the laws governing the universe be laid down, fell a victim to the base and mighty opposition of clergymen. In 1928 he was summoned before the clergy and accused of setting forth doctrines of 'suspicious novelties' and was condemned to a severe term of imprisonment for fourteen years.

So also Galileo, who invented the telescope and conducted several new experiments in astronomy was accused of having tried to undermine the authority of the Bible and imprisoned. Within the walls of prison he died, deaf, blind and broken hearted on hearing the news of his only daughter's death. Without a monument he was buried; but today Florence keeps up his memory by the erection of a monument. Thus following a policy of foolish obstinacy, two of the noblest men were thrown into prison. But the rash clergymen themselves realized later that their hopes, that by confining such men as Bacon and Galileo within the prison walls, science in its childhood could be crushed, were futile.

The development of medical science was a great stroke to the power of clergymen. Before the medical science was strong enough to resist all its enemies, even a whole nation, attacked by terrible diseases, like the plague or smallpox or malaria was considered to be only the God's punishment on that nation. The doctors who tried to find remedy for those diseases were working against God and therefore they were sinners. According to religious doctrines which ran even in the veins

of human beings, what a diseased must do was to give enormous sums of money to temples, in the name of the worship of God, where these clergymen dwelt, call one of them and pray to God in his presence. Several nations have perished like that in the middle ages. Naturalists were equally troubled by the clergy as scientists or medical men. They even threatened to kill Darwin when he began to teach his students the origin of mankind from monkeys which were quite against what was written in the Bible, that God created men.

The great wars that were fought – the pools of human blood that were shed – that succeeded the Protestant Revolt, in Europe were all due to the persecution of peoples and rulers by the clergymen. A great storm of fights in and outside every country in Europe swept over for a long time when people began to protest against the Catholic clergymen, who exercised such unbearable powers over the poor people that they were almost suffocated within the walls of the religious doctrines of those times.

Having written so far, taking instances from the history of other countries, it is my duty to write something about our mother country. Some people, now-a-days seeing that their motherland India is so backward from the rank of the civilized countries, have begun to boast themselves that India in the past was the greatest country in the whole world. It was the greatest, I admit but the greatness depended more upon the influence exercised by clergymen (Brahmins) over the people and rulers than upon civilizations. This fact we can make out by reading from history, the invasions of Mahmud of Gazni and other rulers of Afghanistan and Baluchistan and by our own eyes, visiting the remaining old temples in several parts of India. Temple is the fortress of clergymen, the idol in it is the arrow-headed hook with which they catch the ignorant people of the country and bring them under their influence, then without any knowledge of the people of the land, they plunder the whole country.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, one of the supposed leaders of India, worships Rama the son of king Dasarata of Ayodhya as the avatar of God. Rama was only a puppet in the hands of the clergymen of his country and when they asked him to kill the poor innocent 'Sudra' for meditating in holy thoughts, he at once went and killed him in cold blood. Many of such merciless and inhuman actions performed by Rama to please the clergymen can be pointed out.

There were the influences exercised over the rulers by the clergymen of this country. Before the advent of English education in India none rose in revolt against those cruel clergymen, as people in other countries did because the majority of the population on whom depended the practical strength of the country, was from ancient times, crushed under the feet of the clergymen. They were driven into the jungles as depressed classes, prohibiting even a glare of education to get into their midst. On those days a 'Sudra' who happened to hear the songs of the Hindu Vedas were punished and molten lead was poured into his ears. If he happened to read the Vedas his tongue was cut off. Thus we see that before the dawn of Western civilization people had to suffer such severe punishments for seeking knowledge.

Young brothers and sisters! Within you lie asleep great powers to conquer the universe. Wake them all. Revolt against all the forces that caged you so long. Abolish the cruel and debasing caste system. Be under the firm belief, that by destroying priesthood you are not becoming a sinner but saviour of mankind. Convert all the temples into workshops. Get freedom to think and to act and rush yourself into the world's broad field of battle.

- *Revolt*, 29 September 1929

Religion in Danger

The tragic effects of mixing up religion with politics and other secular activities are being keenly realized by most thinking persons in India. Zealous fanatics and misguided communalists are flourishing here with the senseless bogey of 'Hinduism in Danger' and 'Islam in Danger'. This mediaeval and retrograde mentality seems by no means confined to India. America which boasts of being the country of 'liberty' and 'freedom' now finds itself with more than one skeleton in its cupboard. No less than three Amercian States – Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas – have prohibited the teaching of the Darwinian Theory of Evolution in Schools and Colleges on the ground that it conflicts with the scheme of the Bible.

The famous Monkeyville trial in Tennessee (*the trail that followed when the Butler act that banned the teaching of evolution in Tennessee schools was challenged - editors*) created something of an international sensation. The world was intensely amused. But since then two other American States have followed suit and frantic attempts are being made to induce 19

other States to capitulate to reaction. This has naturally alarmed the progressive elements of America and organizations like the Science League of America, the American Association of University Professors and the Civil Liberties Union have started a vigorous counter propaganda.

The state of Arkansas decided upon the anti evolution law after a general plebiscite under the initiative and referendum system which prevails there. By it any teacher who teaches the evolutionary theory is to be promptly expelled and he has further to pay a fine of $ 500. Similarly if any member of any text book commission allows or connives at the teaching of the Darwinian Theory "to the students of any public School and College or the State University, including the Medical School", he makes himself liable to alike penalty.

How serious the result of this measure are likely to be, can be seen from the declaration of J. P. Womack, State Superintendent of Public Schools, that the act would automatically ban 'The Encyclopedia Britannica', the 'Webster's Dictionary' and other works of reference which define the theory of evolution as the onward march of human beings from a lower order of animals. Further almost all the Sciences proceed on the basis of the theory of evolution. This would mean that the modern scientific treaties particularly the textbooks in Astronomy, Biology, Zoology, Botany, Anthropology and other sciences will have to be so ADAPTED or ALTERED as to bring them into agreement with the "dogmas" of fundamentalism. In other words says Maynard Shipley, President of the Science League of America, "they (the text books) will be reduced to the cultural level of ancient Babylonia, Chaldea and Cyria, thus carrying the pupils to a remote pre-scientific age and thereby repudiating the scientific advancements of modern times".

The scientists, however are not going to take this outrageous measure lying down. Dr. Frank Vinsonhaler, Dean of the Medical School of the University of Arkansas caused a sensation by publicly declaring that this measure will be ignored by the medical department of the University. To leave the teaching of evolution out of the Medical School would wreck it and therefore the faculty will continue to teach as heretofore, regardless of the law.

The cry of 'Religion in Danger' which is raised everywhere to prop up decaying dogmas and discredited superstition, should be squarely

met by every thinking person. How much mischief it has already done, specially in our own country is well-known. Drastic steps must be taken to fight the pernicious activities of reactionaries and nothing will be found so efficacious to the end as the creation of a radical and modernist ideology in the country. We must also learn thoroughly the often repeated but as often forgotten lesson of keeping religion out of secular matters. For it is not Religion that is in danger, so much as Progress.

- *Young Liberator.*

- *Revolt*, 29 September 1929

Rationalism in India

(By the Editor)

The Bombay Chronicle, in its issue of 30th October writes:

"It is impossible for observant men to shut their eyes any longer to the advent of a new movement in the realm of thought in India which may generally be called the Rationalistic movement. It is a tendency, for the present confined to a few, to examine every social or religious belief or usage in the light of pure Reason and to reject every belief which is repugnant to the dictates of reason even if it be sanctioned by ancient texts or custom. The tendency is not altogether new in India. Not to go far back in history the rise of the Brahma Samaj was indicative of freedom of thought on religion and of increasing reliance on Reason rather than on Dogma. Modern education, the progress of science, and several other forces strengthened the tendency. Apart from events in Turkey and other Asiatic countries, Mahatma Gandhi's message of truth as the final arbiter and his own relentless pursuit of Truth, unhindered by any dogma or custom have created a ferment in the Indian mind, the full effect of which are too subtle to be now measured. But the unanimous acceptance by the Congress of the campaign against the custom of untouchability registered a phenomenal change in the mind of the cultured Indian. The widespread cry for the abolition of Caste, another time-honored institution, and the cordial response given to the Sarda Bill despite the force of custom and of scriptural texts against it, are other signs of the change. A few months ago, we heard of a magazine called the "Rationalist," started in the Punjab to preach pure Rationalism. Shortly after was started in Bengal, "the League against Mullaism" to fight fanaticism and superstition prevalent among many

Muslim Mulla. *In Madras similar work is being carried on by a weekly paper called the "Revolt". Apart from the merits of the views propagated by it, this paper does exhibit the spirit of revolt against custom or dogmas that do not appeal to Reason."*

Coming nearer home, we are ourselves astonished at the very radical views expressed by our correspondents on vital questions of religion. They certainly betoken a real ferment in the minds of our educated men and a strong desire to appeal from authority to Reason. The many correspondents who have written on the subject of "Teachings of Zoaraster" have covered a much wider ground than suggested by the subject itself. Most of them, including Parses, Hindus, Christians, and Muslims, have displayed a clear rationalistic bias. The specific question which has agitated their minds is the present degraded position of priests. Some suggest that the priestly class must be radically reformed and others that the class must go altogether. If priests cannot be got to do anything better than go through or lead men through rites and ceremonies and mechanically say ill-understood vicarious prayers for consideration, few will regret their going. But it may be urged by some that society needs true ministrants to the soul as it needs doctors and teachers to minister to the body and the mind.

Society sorely needs religious missionaries like Swami Vivekanand or Swami Rama Tirth. Not all missionaries can rise to their stature but many can follow the lines chalked out by them. In painful contrast with such missionaries is the average priest of the present day who is himself superstitious and ignorant and feeds the superstition of the people whom he serves. Priests like these are a drag on society and naturally bring their order into contempt. The evil that they do is aggravated where they constitute themselves into a caste and demand reverence by virtue of their belonging to the Caste. The whole institution of Priesthood, if it is to exist at all – and we see no reason why it should continue to exist – needs an urgent and drastic reform.

It must be noted at the same time that the superstition among priests is to a large extent only the reflection of the superstition among the people who support them. So long as people are content with mere rites and ceremonies as a substitute for religion, priests will not want to accommodate them. So long as people think that there is more merit in giving gifts to gods and goddesses than in building schools and hospitals, there will not be a dearth of persons to receive the gifts on behalf of the gods and goddesses. We therefore, welcome the advent

of a strong reaction against superstition that we noted above. We also welcome Mr. Nariman's idea of forming an Association "the prime objective of which shall be the annihilation of all those ruinous customs and manners, of those rites and rituals which in the name of God have retarded the onward march of man."

- *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

Notes to 1.1

1. This article was specifically written for *Revolt* by the author who was a regular subscriber to the weekly.

1.2 Religion and Education

Religious Education

Mr. E. Maud Simon writes in the Literary Guide:-

The president of the Rationalist Press Association has contributed to the correspondence in *The Times* on "Religious Education" but in those columns no reference could be made to the crux of such education at the present day, whether given in the school or the home. This lies largely in the question as to how far the supernatural origin and incidents of Christianity, the offshoot of Judaism, as recorded in a pre-scientific age when literary and historical accuracy are still to be taught to the young as accredited facts? If so the outlook is dark indeed for nothing can be more fatal to moral teaching than to base it on foundations that crumble away under the tests of modern research. Neither the major nor minor miracles chronicled in the New Testament, which are still accepted by institutional Christianity if not by Modernists, would be taken seriously by any of our ecclesiastics if taught as the tenets of another religion. And in this connection it may be noted that in the baptismal service of the Church of England, ratified by the confirmation of later years, the personality of the Devil still enters into the scheme of religious education on the other hand, the Unitarians and many Free Churches have shaken off most of the shackles, and are founding their faith on an inward spiritual witness to a guiding spiritual power, expressed in but not limited to Christianity.

Well may Professor Garham Wallas ask what will happen to a teacher who finds that he is no longer certain that he knows "what Christianity really is."

- *Revolt*, 13 February 1929

Religious Education

(by B.G.)

Religion has played an important part in human life from the very beginning of the universe. Even before writing and reading were known to the people, religious stories were told from generation to generation. In India religious education was perhaps the only education first given to man; but under the present regime of the Britishers, religious

education does not form part of the present-day educational institutions. So, it is but natural, that the most religious minded people of the world, the Hindus, raise a bitter cry that their religion is in danger.

Let us examine what sort of religious education is given in other religions. Education, as we all know, is to draw out what is latent in a child. The teacher helps the child to learn for itself, and in modern educational methods, experiments form the important factor in education. But on the other hand, in religious classes, the teacher infuses into the children certain ideas which they must repeat even if they do not understand them. In a religion, certain dogmas are held sacred and professed to have been told by god himself. We are told that god created a man and a woman and put them to watch the garden of Eden. The necessity for god to keep them in a garden, leave them naked, forbid them from plucking an attractive fruit, and then curse them with untold miseries, we are yet to have a prophet to tell us. Again, why not the Almighty shorten the life of Ravana, instead of being born as Rama, undergo the shame of being abducted by his consort and destroy the big kingdom of Lanka ?

It is this sort of education, we are failing to give our children.

Man, in his impressionable age is being told some ghost stories and made to believe them. What more do these religious books tell us than the elementary principles for the welfare of humanity? Nobody in this world denies that theft, murder etc. are bad. Then, should we have a god to come down all the way from the "Seventh Heaven," and be born as one of us to tell us all these elementary principles? India wants bread, but she is given stone. It is not religion, the crying need of the masses, but two meals a day and sufficient clothes to cover their body.

Years of religious education has not changed the mentality and character of the twice born, and yet why should we burden our children with more of stories and poems to be got by heart?

- *Revolt*, 17 April 1929

Religious Instruction in Primary Schools

(by D.V.Pradhan)

Of late religion has been made to play a very unhealthy part. In the public affairs of this country, to an extent that we seem almost to begin

over again the religious cat calls of Europe seven to eight centuries ago. Whatever may be the origin of the differences that may crop up, they at once take on the religious cloak and sides are instantly taken on the so-called religious basis. Common differences on sanitary and national importance or things necessary for the healthy growth of the individuals and nations are discussed on the religious plane. If one asserts that India as it is seen today is nothing more but a slave to the mentality that has been created by the religious heads, we shall not be far from truth. Our every day life is also dominated by religion and we can safely say that the overdose of religion has killed the mentality of reasoning of every son of this land. Is there any way to get out of this entanglement? Can we be free and use our reasoning for the betterment of India? What should we do to break the shackles of religion and give full play to our natural faculties? The answer is simple enough. We should look to every day happenings in other parts of the world. The whole world is astir to weed out religion from public life and its endeavouring may have practically made it a question of individual observance. Russia has frankly gone in for ATHEISM. It is not question of toleration with the religion. It is strictly banned and is a bar to any public employment. Gauging from the events that are turning out, every one will have to agree that time is fast approaching when every nation will have to take a leaf out of Russia's book in this direction. There can be no serious contradiction to this view.

History teaches us that religion has played great mischief and has added much to the miseries of the world instead of happiness in any way. It has been a constant menace to the progress of the world. There is a great deal of truth in what that great economist, Karl Marx, has said that religion is opium, nay it is even worse than that. Opium makes a man temporarily insane but fanaticism is the acme of religion. It drives a man mad throughout his life. There is no other go for him but to suffer and make others suffer through the infection which has made its home in him. Had there been no religion there would not have been the fights of Roman Catholics and Protestants, Jews and the Gentiles, Hindus and Moslems, Buddhism and Brahminism. This cult or that cult. This sect or that sect.

Leaving aside the question of the world we can learn much from the happenings of this country. Let the past history not teach us anything. Let it remain on the shelves. But even without turning over its pages

the very recent quarrels and disturbances that were and are going on in every corner of this country must go a long way to teach us as to the evils they let loose. The sorry spectacles of Hindu-Moslem riots, Brahmin-Non Brahmin controversy and Touchable-Untouchable struggles will amply prove the mischief that has been wrought amongst us. It is a patent fact that these differences have only kept us from giving a united front to the foreign Government who are exploiting this country.

The mentality that has been created is such that even pure and simple economic struggles are given a religious tinge. If a serious student of Politics tries to analyse the real causes of these feuds, he will at once discover that all such abnormalities in this land are nothing but the adverse play of Economics. Go to the bottom of the real trouble and you will find that the economic condition of this country based as it is on the most iniquitous capitalistic system is the only root cause of the present day feuds. The Hindu-Moslem problem in the Punjab is nothing but pure economical struggle of the later with the former who have captured every possible places of power and pelf. The same can be said of other parts, in some places parallel to others modified. In some places Hindus are masters of the situation, at others Moslems. But all these struggles every now and then are being inflamed and given a colour of religious fights by the agitators of the market place, Mullahs, Moulvis, Priests and Brahmins, the so-called watch dogs and trustees of so called religions.

This ought to suffice every one to realize the situation in its true perspective and to come to a decision to see that religion is at least made an individual observance within the four walls of one's place of residence. It must not be allowed to continue its appearance in public life. No questions ought to be discussed from the religious point of view but from the interests of the society. If we are not in a mood to do it at least efforts ought to be made to see that the next generation of this country is kept aloof from this poison. But instead of that one finds to his regret the attempts that are being made in some quarters to introduce the system of religious instructions in the Primary Schools.

It is in the Primary Schools where the foundations of Indian Nationalism and world internationalism are being laid. These are the places that would mould the early and impressionable lives of the citizens of tomorrow. This is where the men and women of this and every land

lay the basis of their usefulness to the country and the people in the future. Primary Schools are the places which can be really called as the places where one is made what he is. They have quite a unique position in the building of the nation, country and world. What should be seen is that the education that will be given to the future citizens should be such that will make them as true to India as to their own lives. We do not want them to be hypocrites nor go about fighting under the guiles of religion as Hindus, Jews, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians and what not. We want only such people who would be proud of themselves as Indians and *Men*. Why do these advocates of religious instructions add to the numerous difficulties by creating and accentuating communal bourgeois? Are there not enough of them? There are lots of them in Hindus, Moslems and others. Religious instruction means nothing but a regular breeding of these mischievous germs at our cost. This insanitary problem ought to be fought from the national point of view, no less than from the international.

Really speaking we have come to such a stage that any communal or religious organization that puts out its head prominently should be given a burial, no matter however difficult the task may be.

It is high time that start in the interest of the Nation and world is made to abolish all the educational institutions that are being conducted on communal and religious grounds and are spreading the infection of so called religion. Let it have at least its own course if we are not prepared to put it down systematically as Russia. Our educational institutions and particularly the Primary Schools should be such that they will mould true citizen of tomorrow who is and shall only be counted upon in the modern states. There is no place for a religious banner in the modern state. If the nation at least keeps its hands off the religious activities and discussions, I am sure there will not be any fights over child marriages, widow re-marriages, temple-entry, pollution, filling in the so-called sacred wells and tanks, common drinking pots irrespective of the castes, crematorium *et hoc genus omne*, much waste of public time and energy will be saved which can well be utilized in furtherance of the interests of the country in other directions.

By the by it will not be out of place to suggest that we very urgently need legislation to ban each and every so called religious activity in the public life. Untouchability ought to be made a penal offence. The so-called high and low caste system of the Hindus ought to be put a

stop to and strict measures ought to be taken against the offender. Every citizen must have equal treatment in every affair of the State. State ought to concern itself to the citizen and not to his religion. The so called religion ought to be confined to such a place where these religious units have their own abodes. They ought not to be allowed to form any association, body or organization based on religious grounds. Provision should also necessarily be made to see that no meetings of children, young men and women take place for the furtherance of any religion. No materialistic body ought to be allowed to spring on religious ground. Not only that. There ought to be special clauses to have the schools absolutely non-religious ones. Nay a regular propaganda ought to be taken in hand by the State to make the children anti-religious. No more Hindu or Moslem Universities or Hindu or Moslem College or Hindu Helping Societies or Moslem co-operative societies ought to be recognized but ought to be wiped away from our midst.

- *Revolt*, 18 August 1929

1.3 THE ATHEISTIC WRITINGS OF S. GURUSWAMI

Itihasas

(*Adapted from the "Kudi Arasu"* [1])

(By S. Guruswami)

Excerpts

Rama a youth of sixteen with the help of his brother Lakshmana kills on old woman. First Rama cuts away her hands, and then his brother chops off her ears and nose: and lastly Rama kills her with an arrow. What courage! What chivalry! What manliness! Two stalwart youths kill an old woman. We are asked to admire the disgusting details of the episode. The Tamil poets put the following words in the mouth of Kooni: "when Rama with the strong bow killed Tataka, a woman, he cast a slur on the manliness of our race, he was laughed at by men." Kamban makes no mention of Lakshmana's disgraceful act of disfiguring a woman who is defenseless. Viswamitra's justification for killing the woman bespeaks the "saint's Character".

Then we come to the question of the Rakshasas disturbing the sacrifices of the Rishis. On this point Griffith observes, "The poet of the Ramayana applied the hated name of Rakshasas to an abhorred and hostile people and this denomination is rather an expression of hatred and horror than a real historical name". The Aryan ascetics occupied the forests of the Non Aryans without their permission and acted as spies. They helped to eradicate the Non-Aryans, with the aid of the Aryan Kings. The "Rakshasas" were hostile to the religion of the Aryans whose rites and sacrifices they disturbed. "They were called night-rangers or rovers because, they patrolled at night." The performance of animal sacrifices in the name of gods was abhorrent to the Non Aryans; they also disliked the Aryan rishis for professing to possess supernatural powers.

The forests belonging to Ravana were occupied by those political spies, and hence the attack by the "Rakshasas" who repelled the foreign

invasion. Maricha is said to have disturbed the yaga performed by Viswamitra only on the sixth day when animals were sacrificed. It is evident why the Aryan poet condemned them it. It is no wonder that the Dravidians considered the Aryans as "Mlechas" or brabarians. (Ref: the Tamil lexicon, "Nigandu" of Mandala Purudar)

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We shall consider the story of Bali. Bali is righteous monarch. He is all powerful. The Devas envy his growing strength born of his tapas. They desire to destroy him. Accordingly they seek the help of Indra who has personal enmity towards Bali and who mercilessly killed Bali's sister already. The Devas along with Indra, go to Vishnu and complain of Bali's great charities. Vishnu falls in with the plan of the Devas, and agrees to destroy Bali. Then Vishnu begs of Bali three feet of earth for carrying on his tapas. The king grants the request in spite of the dissuasions of his priest Sukrachari. Bali performs the ceremonial of promise (tharai) by pouring water in Vishnu's hands. The priest takes the shape of a bee and prevents the flow of water from the nozzle of the kettle. Vishnu becomes aware of this and pricks at the bee. The priest's eyes are blinded. Vishnu succeeds in cheating Bali and most brutally kills him in the end. Valmiki writes of the "shameless begging of three feet of earth by Vishnu". What shall we say of the God who kills a man because he is too charitable? It is no wonder that Vishnu who murdered a women (Sukra's mother) acted up to the advice of Indra, another god given to murdering defenseless women.

To resume the story. On their way to Mithila, Rama, Lakshmana and Viswamitra reach the banks of the Sona. The Rishi narrates the following account of the spot to the two princes. "There was once a king Kusa by name, the mind-born son of Brahma. Vayu was the last of his four sons, and this dominion belonged to him. Kusanabha the royal sage had a hundred lovely daughters. One day when they were playing in the gardens, Vayu the Wind-god fell in love with them. He said that he would endow them with deathless youth and the beauty of the Immortals if they would only consent to his wish. The maidens laughed at his presumption, and refused his request telling him that they should consult their father. Enraged at their bold and defiant words, the wind-god, putting forth his might, distorted their graceful limbs out of all recognition. In great grief and shame they ran to their father with sobs and tears, and told him what had happened. The father admired their

patience and forgiveness and blessed them for keeping up the prestige of the family. It was about that time a rishi named Chuli was practicing Brahma Tapas. A Gandharva, Somada by name, approached him to have a son. The rishi gave her a mind-born son named Brahmadatta. And Kusanabha bestowed his hundred daughters on Brahmadatta. As soon as he touched them their deformity disappeared. Kusanabha had a son named Gadhi, and him am I proud to call my father. My sister was Satyavadi, who after her death became the holy stream Kausiki. By her side have I chosen my abode." Thus does Viswamitra narrate the story of his ancestry. Then the rishi and the two princes reach the shores of the Holy Ganges.

The above story of the Wind-god indicates his despicable character. And yet he is one of the Devas. He attempts to ravish the hundred innocents girls, and when they disagree, he behaves most brutally by deforming their bodies. Can we imagine anything more wicked and nefarious? We see how the gods that were worshipped by the Aryans were all of them abject and contemptible. Vishnu is a murderer of women. He is given to inordinate sensuality and indulges in carnal pleasures day in and day out. He has not got the shame to rise up from his matrimonial bed when others come in. He enters into the dead man's body and cunningly shares the bed of his wife. When the maiden burns herself, like a mad man does this god prate and roll himself on her ashes. The Tamil poet Kamban makes only a casual mention of these repulsive anecdotes. Hundred women marrying one man indicates that polygamy was the custom among the Aryans. And in the Mahabaratha, Draupathi marries five husbands at a time. This show that an Aryan woman could marry any number of men. This feature of the Aryan civilization is not a thing to be overlooked by the historians. There is another important point, important to the critic, but insignificant to the pandits, – to be noted by us. Valmiki mentions in more than two places that Rama and Lakshmana rise up from their sleep only after Viswamitra wakes them up. Perhaps being addicted to royal splendour, they might not have acquired the habit of rising earlier. Or they might have become exhausted owing to their exploits in the forest. In that case, shall we say they were merely human and not the incarnation of any God?

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Viswamitra recounts to the princes the story of the Ganges. Himavan,

the monarch of mountains had two daughters Ganga and Uma. The Devas prayed Himavan to send his daughter Ganga as a river for the benefit of the three worlds. The father agreed, and Ganga went to heaven. Uma the younger daughter was married to Siva. Overpowered with sensuousness, Siva spent hundreds of years in continuous cohabitation with his wife without completing the act. Brahma and the Devas feared that the result of such a long-lasting union might be the birth of a son whose fury might endanger the safety of the universe. In trembling accents they prayed to Siva, "Supreme Lord! The worlds are unable to bear thy fiery energy. Have mercy on us and restrain thy act and withdraw." Siva agreed, but said that his energy had already moved from its receptacle, and asked them as to who should receive it. The Devas answered that the earth (who was herself a goddess) should receive it. Accordingly, Siva let out his energy on the earth, and it spread about the mountains and forests. Thereafter the Devas implored Agni and Vayu to enter into the out flowing generative fluid. Permeated by Agni it was transformed into a white mountain, and there from sprang holy reeds. The Devas praised Siva for averting the danger. But Uma's rage knew no bounds. Her eyes blazed fire and she pronounced a terrible curse against the trembling gods. "You that have dared to interfere with my pleasures; you that have caused me grief and disappointment, you shall reap the fruit of your crooked ways. No sons shall be born unto you of your own wives". Then she turned to the earth and said, "Vile creature, you envied me a son and succeeded in depriving me of one. Many shall be thy forms and many thy lords. You will also lose the pleasure of giving birth to a child." Siva pitied the Devas and proceeded with his wife to the Himalayas to engage himself in stern tapas. (Ref. 36th Chapter of Valmiki)

But Devas wanted someone to lead them in the place of Siva who had gone for tapas. They went to Brahma and sought his advice. He replied that Agni, who carried the energy of Siva would bring forth a son by Ganga to be their leader. Thereat the Devas went to Agni and implored him to direct the energy towards Ganga. Discharging the fiery liquid on all sides, he permeated her in all her limbs with his fierce might. Ganga was penetrated through and through, and she cried out in great agony that she was unable to bear the terrible energy of Siva. Agni pitied her and asked her to let out the superfluous liquid at the foot of the Himayan. Ganga obliged and the liquid that was let out by her turned into gold and other shining metals. Finally, she dropped out

the foetus also, and Skanda slipped out of Ganga's womb. The infant was nursed by the Kritikas. He developed six heads to suckle at the breasts of the six kritikas. He was named Kartikeya after his foster mothers. He was afterwards taken by the Devas to be their leader. (Ref. 37th Chapter of Valmiki)

The above story is altogether obscene. We would not have recapitulated it in these columns but for the sense of duty in us to expose the 'holy' Ramayana in its true colours. The fear of the Devas that the result of a prolonged cohabitation will be a terrible offspring is quite fantastic. Further, the idea that Siva himself should be overwhelmed with passion and indulges in the act for hundreds of years does not become the chief of the gods. At the request of the Devas, Siva is said to have immediately withdrawn. The Devas are afraid of the birth of a child to Siva and Uma. To avoid the birth of an unwanted child the Devas evidently requested Siva to practice a method of Birth-control, and prevent Uma conceiving. Only the method advised by the Devas and practiced by Siva is the most inefficient and cruel of all methods of Birth-control ever advocated. *Coitus Interruptus* practiced by Siva is most harmful to man and woman alike. Apparently Siva had no access to pessaries and other modern methods of Birth-control which are less harmful. In this connection, shall we be justified in directing the attention of those who condemn Birth-control by any means (as being contrary to nature) to the great precedent of Siva? Uma's cursing the Devas is natural in the circumstances and quite justifiable. The disappointment at the unnatural interruption of her pleasures and the resentment she feels at those who brought about the interruption, indicate exactly the feelings of any other woman placed in a similar situation. The woman in Uma was disappointed at her enjoyment being denied its climax. The mother in Uma keenly resented the prevention of her conception. Uma aptly taunts the Devas for their "crooked ways." They deserved Uma's curse. There is nothing surprising in that the curse took effect. Because, the Devas were already advocates of Birth-control! Only poor earth was made the scape goat. She was induced by the gods to do something obnoxious and was rewarded by Uma's curse. It is also curious how Agni and Vayu entered into the energy of Siva. From the account given about the birth of Skanda, we are led to infer that Ganga underwent an abortion. The superfluous liquid let out at the foot of the Himalayas is said to have turned into metals. Evidently the imagination of the poet has run riot. Skanda is born

prematurely in an abortion. He not only survives but is so virile that he has got to be nursed by six women. He develops six heads to suckle mothers. If simultaneous suckling was his object, Skanda should have developed twelve heads to suit the twelve breasts of his six foster mothers. Evidently the poet had no sense for arithmetic.

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Viswamitra continues his narration, Sagara the ruler of Ayodhya had, by his first wife Kesini, a son named Asamanja. He married a second wife also by name Sumathi. She conceived a lump of flesh which broke into pieces, and from that issued forth 60,000 sons. They were brought up in vessels filled with ghee, until they grew up to boyhood. Asamanja the eldest was cruel to the people and was therefore banished. Many years after, Sagara began a horse sacrifice. Indra the chief of the Devas took the shape of a Rakshasa and made away with the sacrificial horse. The father asked his 60,000 sons to search for the horse. After searching the surface of the earth from end to end, the infuriated sons of Sagara delved into the earth and tore her vitals with their adamantine nails. Nagas, Asuras and other mighty creatures were also slaughtered by thousands. The Devas and Asuras reported the matter to Brahma the creator. Brahma answered, 'The wicked princess shall be consumed by the fire of Kapila's wrath. Their doom is near at hand'. The celestials returned satisfied with the answer. The sons delved deeper and met Kapila the incarnation of the Eternal Vasudeva; and hard by was the long-sought-for horse. Inflamed with wrath, they flew at the sage. Kapila's fiery rage burnt them into ashes. Sagara also died in remorse after having ruled for 32,000 years. Ansuman, the son of Asamanja learns from Garuda that his 60,000 uncles could be sanctified only by the water of the Holy Ganges. But he did not succeed in bringing down Ganges from the heavens. He also died ruling for the same number of years. His son also ruled for an equal number of years. His grand son Bhagiratha engaged himself in stern tapas to fulfill the desire of his grand father. Brahma appeared before him and said, "Pleased am I with your tapas, and Holy Ganga will come down according to your wish. Your other request that the race of lshwaku should ever remain upon earth, is also granted. But heed thee, the earth cannot bear the force of the celestial river, and make a request of Siva to undertake this tremendous task'. Thereupon Bhagiratha prayed to Siva, who promised to bear upon his head the Daughter of the Mountain. From the high

heavens Ganga fell on the head of Siva and was entangled in the maze of his lofty coils of matted hair. From thence she came down to the earth in seven streams; the seventh stream followed Bhagiratha for the accomplishment of his purpose. And the holy waters flowed over the ashes of the sons of Sagara "(Ref. Chapters 38 to 44 of Valmiki.)

Let us examine the above story. Sagara's wife conceives a lump of flesh which breaks into 60,000 pieces. Evidently another case of abortion. But then, the prematurely born children are nursed in ghee pots, a feat beyond the reach of the imagination of any modern obstetrician. We have already seen how the chief of the Devas (Indra) had made his mark as a murderer. Now, we have an occasion to see how he is not deficient even in theft. Other aspects of the character of the chief god will be noticed later on as we proceed with the narrative. And it is no wonder the Devas prove worthy of such a leader. Brahma who supports the unrighteous cause of the Devas must necessarily be given the position of the "Creator" among the hierarchy of gods. Indra's theft of the sacrificial horse leads to the slaughter of millions and to the death of numerous princes. The Eternal Vasudeva whose incarnation is Kapila, is an example of the ignorant and angry tapasvi. He is said to be engaged in stern tapas with the stolen horse by his side. When the princes charge the "saint" with theft, he burns them to ashes. The superhuman power born of his austerities did not give him wisdom to see that he was in possession of stolen property and in law he was answerable for the theft unless he proved that he had no knowledge of the theft. Sagara, his son and grandson are said to have ruled each for 32,000 years. No pious Hindu should doubt this peculiar fact, for the Ramayana is a historical document. The boon granted by Brahma that the race of lshwaku shall continue eternally, is another historical fact. Only the descendents of the sun have migrated to London. The Ganga is entangled in the matted hair of Siva. The three eyed god might have caught a cold. Might be his passion for the fair goddess stimulated his brain to such heat that a cold water douche was welcome.

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At the request of Rama, Viswamitra proceeds to recount the history of the city of Visala: "In the Kritayuga, the sons of Diti were mighty and powerful and they were called Asuras; while the sons of Aditi were called Devas. Both of them wanted to escape the decrepitude of age and the horrors of death. At length they hit upon a plan and resolved

to churn the Milky Ocean and partake of the Ambrosia that would spring therefrom and which would ensure them immortality. They churned the ocean, and there arose from the seething waters, Dhanvantri (the God of Health) and sixty thousand lovely Apsaras. The Devas and the Asuras refused to have them and hence they came to be public women, free to all. Next came forth Varuni who was also refused by the Asuras. But the Devas accepted her. Then arose from the ocean a horse and a gem. And lastly appeared the Amirta. The Devas and the Asuras fought for the possession of the immortal essence. In the terrible battle that ensued, many of the Asuras were killed. Lord Vishnu appeared as a fascinating siren (Mohini), and carried away the hard-won Amrita from Vishnu (sic), and having exterminated the Asuras, ruled over the worlds. Ditti was stricken with grief at the death of her sons, and she prayed to her husband Kasyapa to bless her with a son, who could take revenge upon Indra. Kasyapa granted the request and asked her to observe severe penance. When Ditty was engaged in tapas, Indra waited upon her with humble reverence. He supplied her with the sacred grass, fire-sticks, water and every other article that she might require. He pressed her limbs when she was hot and was ever useful to her.

Ten years more for the completion of the penance when one day, Ditty turned to Indra and said, "My dear, soon you will have the pleasure of seeing your younger brother. Though I first resolved to bring forth a son to put you down, my heart has been won over by your sweet kindness and watchful service. And I shall take care in bringing both of you so that both may live long." Having said this, Diti worn out with her fasts and penances, chanced to fall asleep in a careless unusual posture, the hair of her head brushing her feet. And it was a great sin to sleep like this especially at midday. Indra, ever on the watch for the slightest slip, saw that she was impure and laughed in derision. He entered into her body through her generative organ and hacked the embryo into seven pieces; whereat it began to set up a pitiful wail. "Cry not, cry not" replied Indra, but all the same he went on with his dreadful task. Diti awoke, and cried out in agony: "Slay not, slay not". Then Indra came out of her body through the same passage. The seven pieces were born as seven Maruts. It was in this city, Rama, that the chief of the gods destroyed Ditti's embryo".

Let us examine the above. If the Ramayana is claimed as a historical document worthy of our pride, the churning of the ocean by means of

the hill and the serpent, affords ample evidences for its historicity. The story of churning the ocean that is given by Kamban, is altogether different from that given by Valmiki. The cause for churning the ocean that is given by Kamban, is his own invention. The Tamils who piously read the Ramayana by Kamban, for the begetting of children – they at-least, should think for a while, whether they are reading the original version of the "Holy" Ramayana. When they are not reading the real story, how can they expect the same benefits that are said to be conferred on the readers of the Ramayana? The sixty thousand Apsaras are said to have become public women just because the Devas and the Asuras refused to accept them. The 'pious' readers of the 'Holy' Ramayana may be justified if they trace the origin of the prostitutes of this country to the days of the Ramayana. We can only pity the maidens for having come out of the 'divine' ocean, after all to lead a wretched life.

Then if the Asuras refuse Varuni, the Devas joyfully accept them. Even as the Devas were expert drunkards (Suras) ,they were not lacking in carnal desires. Lord Vishnu plays the part of the monkey which acted as judge in the equal distribution of the cake between the two cats. The 'Protector of the universe' robs the fruits of other's labors. And this god figures as the teacher of the world's dharma (Bhagavat Gita) to Arjuna. What else can we expect from him than the curse of Varnashrama which has reduced the country to the present position? Diti is said to have yielded to Indri's services such as fanning and pressing her limbs. What shall we say of the sincerity of her tapas? It cannot be said that she was unaware of the fact as she was engaged in tapas. For, she is said to have acknowledged Indra's services, and thanked him for his sweet kindness. Diti is said to have committed a sin, in sleeping in an unusual posture. If such trivialities could make a woman impure and sinful, and if on that score Indra commits the despicable deed, we need no excuse in declaring the Ramayana as an "Immoral Story." The chief of the gods is said to have entered through the generative organ of his stepmother. The proportion of their bodies is beyond our imagination. Even if it is possible by some divine power, is this the standard of morality of the days of the Ramayana? Indra's act is very brutal and barbarous. He destroys the embryo of his stepmother. If this is the morality of the chief of the gods and if this devil is helped by Lord Vishnu, what attributes shall we give to the other gods worshipped by the people belonging to the "greatest of the world religions"?

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On their way Viswamithra and the princes notice a lonely hermitage. Rama wants to know the history connected with it. Viswamithra narrates as follows: "Gautama rishi was inhabiting this place with his wife Ahalya. Indra fell in love with her and was ever on the watch for accomplishing his wishes. One day, when the rishi was absent, he approached her in her husband's dress and expressed his desire. That was the menstrual period of her, but the chief of gods insisted upon fulfilling his passion. She gladly yielded. Gautama came in and caught the two red handed. They stood before him quaking with fear. The rishi's wrath flamed forth and he cursed Indra, "Impious wretch! Thou shalt be deprived of that which served you to carry out your nefarious purpose".

No sooner were the words uttered, than the scrotum of Indra withered and fell away from his body. Next he turned to Ahalya, Indra's partner in guilt, "Thou shalt lie here for thousands of years, ever hungry and only the air as your food. At a future age, there shall come here Rama, at the touch of whose feet thou shalt resume the original beauty and return to live with me".

Deprived of his vital organs, Indra approached the gods and said, "It was for you that I undertook this dangerous work. You wanted me to spoil the rishi's tapas by rousing his anger. And now I am visited by the consequences. Hence it is your duty to restore to me what I have lost through you". The gods took counsel and transferred to Indra the scrota of the goat. Thenceforth the dead ancestors and devas gladly accepted the offerings of goat without their scrota, in deference to Indra who wears the "scrotum of a goat". Vishmamitra finishes his story and Rama enters the hermitage of Gautama. At the touch of Rama's feet Ahalya rises up with life and then joins her husband (Ref: 48th and 49th Chapters of Valmiki)

Indra figures, in this account, as an unscrupulous debauch. He is overwhelmed with passion that he interferes with a woman during her menstrual period. The god goes disguised in the dress of Ahalya's husband in order to deceive her. But she is not deceived. She recognizes Indra and yields to him. He is caught red handed by the husband. In his anger Gautama loses all sense of justice and fairplay. His fickle minded wife commits adultery with Indra. Though Indra was at fault having tempted her, she partakes of the guilt equally with Indra in that she willingly yields up to him. Gautama's curse is terrible as against Indra who is deprived of his vital organ while Ahalya is submitted to a

temporary trance and is taken back as Gautama's wife when she regains consciousness at the touch of Rama's feet. This is altogether unfair to Indra and the rishi displays partiality to his own wife for whom he evidently has a soft corner in his heart in spite of her adulterous proclivities. We also see that the rishi agrees to receive her again after she gets purified by the touch of Rama's feet. Is it not absurd to maintain that a woman will regain her lost chastity at the touch of anybody's feet? If Ahalya is said to have reciprocated Indra's love why does the "all knowing" rishi insist upon receiving her back again? This is one of the many instances of the old morality, strewn over the pages of the Ramayana which are repugnant to the moral sensibility of the moderns. Indra is said to have committed adultery in order to rouse the anger of the rishi and destroy his tapas which menaced the gods. The Devas gladly accepting the offerings of the goat is confirmed in the 3rd Chapter, Slogas, 268-272 of the Code of Manu.

- *Revolt*, 12 and 19 December 1928, 2, 9,16, 23 January 1929

Exposure

We have to apologise to our readers for the delay in continuing the publication in our columns of the series of translations from the Ithihasas. The delay is unavoidable and we hope to make good before long. Meanwhile we are glad to find that the series has attracted widespread attention and we are inundated with queries and suggestions regarding the presentation of these translations. While there are some who approve of Mr. Guruswami's method, there are others, who are frankly furious.

To allay the doubts and misgivings we shall restate our attitude towards the Ithihasas. We plead guilty to the charge that our object is to effect a change in Hindu ideals by drawing people away from the teachings of the Ithihasas, which idolise outworn superstitions. The virtues, so called, delineated through the characters of the Ramayana suit only a primitive society. Their adoption to modern times spells National disaster.

It is often said that we should retain the good things in the Ramayana and eschew the bad. We do not desire to be unnecessarily offensive and would gladly undertake the task were it possible. Let us illustrate our difficulties. Rama killed a "Sudra" for the sin of having performed religious austerities to which only the twice born were entitled. The defender of the Ramayana ejaculates: "This incident may be authentic, but my Rama never did it. I feature to myself a Rama who was not

guilty of such inhumanity". We are willing to venture on a process of such elimination of the incidents in the story if there were a possibility of a skeleton of the main plot surviving a process of such wholesale operations. There is no such possibility. Rama killed Thataka, an old woman who objected to the inhuman practice of sacrificing dumb animals to gain religious merit. Rama and Lakshmana ill-treated and mutilated a helpless woman in the forest who dared to aspire to marry either of them.

Ramayana does not advocate chivalry towards the fair sex. Rama lay in ambush and assassinated Vali when the latter was engaged in a life and death struggle with his own brother. Rama intrigued at Ravana's court and won over to his side Vibhishana whose help was invaluable in getting at the weak points of the enemy. Ramayana does not advocate chivalry in the warfare. Rama abandoned his throne in obedience to the unexpressed wish of an old dotard of a father deserting his country and his people who looked up to him for protection and guidance. Bharata who ascended the throne went about fooling with his brother's sandals on his head neglecting the duties of his high office. There is no spirit of public service in any of the characters of the Ramayana.

A Rama would not be tolerated for a single moment on a modern throne. If the defender of the Ramayana eliminates all the incidents enumerated above, the entire story vanishes. The evils of present day Hindu society draw nourishment from the teachings of the Ramayana. Caste, untouchability, suppression of women, husband worship, brother worship and every other impediment to progress have their origin within the crevices of the epic edifice. It is waste of time for the reformer to trace every evil to its individual source; the whole edifice will have to pulled down in the interest of National economy.

Our young men will not learn to sacrifice at the altar of their country so long as they worship at the altar of Rama. They follow the example of Rama: worship their fathers and abandon their country. The teachings of the Ramayana, therefore, is a menace to Indian Nationalism. The patriot should protect the masses from the nefarious influence of the Ithihasas, and save the children of the land from being led astray by the debasing doctrine which undermines National life.

- *Revolt*, 13 February 1929

Teaching of the Puranas

(By Esji)

When teacher and pandits write text books for children the prefaces invariably proclaim their special qualifications to train young minds. Only a very small percent of such books contain any information. More than ninety-nine percent are books describing stories from the epics and the puranas. The authors lay emphasis upon the necessity for religious education, and on this plea, they summarise these old time stories and prescribe them as food for immature children. The pandits argue that though the stories are fictions they are important in that, they teach good morals. But the fact is ignored that these pandits who have imbibed the superstitions of the puranas are unfit to serve as moral preceptors for the young. They are wedded to the horrid practices inculcated in the puranas and begin to invent queer reasons in justification of their belief in them. "Acts" of god are not to be examined by the limited understanding of poor mortals. It is blasphemy to question the words of our ancient rishis and saints; those who do not believe in them are heretics deserving of eternal damnation. If these teachings are instilled in young minds, how can we expect the exercise of commonsense, by the rising generation? Such stunted intellects cannot think or reason for themselves or entertain grand aspirations, or originate sublime ideas. The stuff that is imbibed by a study of the superstitious text books makes for a helpless dependence on external help by god or any other supernatural being and promotes idleness and imbecility.

During lessons on Saiva religion a boy with a critical mind will naturally question the morality of the saint Siva Sundaramurti, who broke his promise to his first wife, and married a second without the former's consent. And if God Siva is said to have helped the saint in the above escapade, the moral sense of the boy rises in revolt. The pandits have no arguments to satisfy the critical spirit and merely curse Western education which has brought about the new mentality. But how can they suppress the growth of reason in modern children? Saint Manickavasagar is said to have built temples and fed Sanyasins with the money given by the king for the purchase of horses. God Siva is said to have helped him in his criminal misappropriation. Naturally the students ask whether any Government could be carried on with

the help of such fraudulent ministers as St. Manickavasagar. They question the "Godliness" of Siva. The pandits are unable to answer. And they curse the influence of Western education. It is no wonder the land which produced ministers who built temples with money misappropriated, has lost its freedom and is forced to learn lessons in statecraft under the dominion of a foreign nation, whose ministers follow wiser and juster methods of administration. The students ask why the god of the holy and pious people who are particular in multiplying temples is subservient to the god of a heathen people with little piety about them and who do not build such magnificent temples. Why the Hindu god which supported St. Manickavasagar against the king did, keep quiet at the time of foreign invasion? The pandits blink. The students are taught that the earth rotates round itself and goes round the sun, they are shown experiments to prove these facts. But in the Religion class, they are taught that the sun is a god riding fast in his one-wheeled car drawn by seven green horses, that Hanuman runs along with him, and that Kunti bore a child by the sun through her cheek at an immature age. No wonder the young minds revolt. The pandits answer these doubts by a curse on Western education. Will they succeed in suppressing reason? Or will the revolt of the young minds materialize and give the go bye to Shastras and puranas?

- *Revolt*, 9 January 1929

Our Country

(By Esji)

While other countries are engaged in researches on wireless, photography, communicating with the inhabitants of Mars, bringing down rain at their will, flying in the air at the rate of hundreds of miles per hour, inventing talking machines, lengthening the life of man, hearing music sung from a distance of thousands of miles, remaining under water for the largest number of hours, inventing" Machine Man," making motor cars which need no petrol, making clocks with straw, swimming the British Channel in the shortest possible time, –

Our country is interested in such researches as, whether a 'Panchama' can be allowed to take water in this tank or not, whether a Nadar can be allowed to enter into this temple or not, whether a Non-Brahmin can be taught Sanskrit or not, whether the Sun-God is drawn by 8

horses or 16 horses, whether Deepavali comes in the month of Purattaasi or Appease (*corresponding to the English months mid-September to mid-November – editors*), whether the 'Namams' (*a mark that identifies Vishnu and his worshippers – editors*) on the god's forehead is "U" mark or "Y" mark, whether the Holy Ashes is to be applied dry or wet, whether Sita was carried by the hair or together with the earth, whether god requires seven dancing girls or more, whether this Purana is true or that, whether this stanza is an interpolation or that stanza the original, whether there are external and internal evidences for the impaling of the Jains by St.Gnanasambandar or not, how many yards should we step aside for this man, and how many for that, whether pollution (theetu) after death lasts for 10 days or 12, how long the pollution lasts in case of sea-voyage and how long in case of Railway journey, whether offerings (Prasadham) are to be distributed after the singing of Thevaram or after the chanting of the Vedas, whether death songs (oppari) belonged to the Aryans or the Dravidians.

Our researches in this sphere are not yet over.

- *Revolt*, 16 January 1929

Stock-taking

(By Esji)

Once upon a time India reveled in the glory of her religion. Temples were multiplying. Some pious gentlemen, intoxicated with the perfumes of sanctity, erected a temple at London. Hindu Gods, thus made a sacrilegious voyage over the seas, to the heathen land. Through the medium of English the caste marks were given philosophic and psychologic interpretations. The "Holy" thread was exhibited to the gaze of admiring foreigners.

And lo! the impatient iconoclasts sprang up to preserve the self-respect of the common people. And the American Mayo undertook an inconvenient exposure. As a result, the people of India have entered on a stock-taking and a drawing up of a balance sheet. Here are the features of the stock sheet.

There are only four crores of widows in our land and there is a tendency for the number to increase indefinitely so long as the Varnashramites hold a number of Conferences. There are six crores of people in this "holy" land who are unseeables, untouchables and unapproachables.

A hundred crores of Rupees are safely locked up within temple walls when millions are dying of starvation. Idle houses, euphemistically termed "charity institutions" are feeding the overfed Brahmins. There are some crores of women who are "religiously" dedicated to prostitution who find their champion defender in Mr. Satyamurti B.A.B.L., M.L.C., Secretary, Independence league. There are the Matathipathis, Sankaracharies, Jeeyers and Mahants who have taken the place of Thugs and Pindaris, but with the sanction of His Majesty's Government. One woman and a half per thousand are educated in a land where the Goddess of learning is enshrined in every home. The average percentage of literacy is seven, in a land where Saraswathi Puja (worship of the goddess of leaning) is celebrated with great eclact. The evil spirits, ghosts and other ferocious gods have settled permanently in the "holy" land. The Census of 1930 will give more interesting figures of the results of the "greatest of religions" for the religionists to chew in.

- *Revolt*, 6 February 1929

The Ramayana of 1929

The Suras at the Government's feet

(By Esji)

Some Brahmins of Trichinopoly held a conference in the premises of the National College and gave vent to their untold sufferings at the hands of the Non-Brahmins. Indeed, the present atmosphere is not pleasing to the Suras, though they had the chance to conduct their conference in a building endowed by a Non-Brahmin, an Asura.

If the Puranas have taught any truth, it is this. The Suras, if they fail in their underhand attempts to vanquish their enemies, directly go to his Majesty the Gracious God. That is what happens today. The Brahmins have appealed to His Majesty's Government, and Mr. Satyamurti has contributed his mite towards the attempt for a timely help in facing the on rush of the Asuras.

What shall we say of the Non-Brahmin benefactors who endow institutions for the benefit of these Suras? A Nattukotai Chettiar built up the Trichi National College. The moneyed monkeys always play

the Hanuman. What shall we say of the Non-Brahmin journalists who cry hoarse in support of the Suras? The journalistic jingos play the Vibhishana. And what shall we say of a Government calling itself civilized which supports the Suras in season and out of season? Lord Vishnu has given his assent in the Assembly to fight the battle of the Suras and destroy the modern Rakshasas, the Sardas and the Gours. But the great Lord has ever been cautious. As in the days of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, His Majesty's Government will not *directly* participate in the fight. Lord Vishnu will be a charioteer as of old at Kurukshetra.

There will be held a conference of Varnashramites at Madras very shortly. If the Asuras hold a meeting at Chingleput the Suras will follow suit at Madras. Certainly there will be a crash; then a flutter of swords. It will be a sight for the Hindu Gods to see. The suras of the puranas were invariably successful, in spite of the enormous powers which the Rakshasas possessed. But now, neither can the Suras frighten the Asuras with divine help or terrible curses, nor can the Asuras terrify the Suras with their might, their varaprasadhams – boons attained after stern tapas. In this "Kaliyuga" the ineffable law of justice will succeed.

- *Revolt,* 13 February 1929

New Employment for Educated Men

(By S. Guruswami)

We are gratified to note that a new profession has been recently opened at Madras by some of the biggest brains(?) of the journalistic world. The "Asthiga Sangam" or the Theists' Association will have a grand organization and a stupendous programme of active propaganda throughout the land.

Ever since the world began, we have heard of advocates pleading the causes of the illiterate. Now we hear of pleaders, (most of them are Editors, mind you) – pleading the cause of "God" himself, who, it is said, is finding his position more and more insecure, especially in his favourite abode, India. There will be a fresh enlistment of educated men, who are prepared to do this most important work. Honorary workers are preferred, though salaries will also be given in certain cases. The object of the new profession will be to preach about the tottering position of the innocent Almighty and to plead for his enthronement. These "messengers of God" – as they will be termed hereafter by the future historian – have direct correspondence with

their client, and will be endowed with 'supernatural' powers of oratory. This client, unlike ordinary clients of the mundane world, being all powerful and all-merciful, will take charge of the families of his condescending pleaders, so that they may devote their whole attention and time in securing an unshakeable position for their 'poor' client. The Bible, the Koran, the Vedas and other law books of this category will have an excessive sale in the years to come, for, it is expected that most of the educated men will take to this new profession. The readers should understand that these 'divine' pleaders are not hankering after money, for, their client, peculiarly enough, is not capable of supplying his pleaders with material wealth. But this should not discourage the would-be pleaders, for, what more do they want in this world than a mere recognition of their 'holy' mission

The Divine Effulgence will throw its glaring flame into the four walls of the headquarters of the Asthiga Sangam (if there is any) and the President will be no less than an 'avatar' in human form. Madras will be the centre of this divine spirit, and according to the 'prophet's' word, 'this electric wave'(of divinity) will immediately take charge of the Madras Corporation for running the trams and lighting the city.

We congratulate the inventors of the new profession in the realm of law, and we sanguinely hope to see a stop to the abnormal drain of money in the purchase of law books. Will all those who want to study law, take to this new profession of pleadership?

- ***Revolt,*** **27 March 1929**

The Revolt Dictionary

(By Esji)

Hinduism: The sugar-coat which contains caste and similar poisons; an honourable means which affords facilities for the wicked to prey upon the innocent; a drug which has an instantaneous effect in making a man a fool.

Caste: A strong poison which the Brahmin administered to his enemy; an epidemic which spread in India after the Aryan invasion.

Brahmin: A fictitious name coined by fools, but which is misapplied to the most unscrupulous and roguish class of humanity; a visionary being which hovers between 'God' and the people.

Hindu Woman: A cheap human machine with nice bodily feature which has been invented by man for the double work of cooking and producing children.

Hindu Temple: A museum of stone images of varied size and kind; a miniature hill worked up into a nasty den which serves as a convenient place for honourable debauchery and idle living in the name of 'God'.

***God*:** A word, the meaning of which is not understood by anyone in the world, but for which people are fighting tooth and nail without themselves knowing the meaning.

- *Revolt*, 27 March 1929

Notes to 1.3

1. The original texts from which these portions have been excerpted are drawn from the Tamil articles written by one of the leading Self-respecter of the time Chandrasekara Pavalar, who was also an outstanding Tamil scholar.

1.4 Atheist Miscellany

The Conference of Gods

(Miss Gnanam)

The chief Gods and the prophets of the world meet in conference at the Atmosphere Hall in Vacancy. After much discussion, Mr. Christ is voted to the chair. There is a large gathering of Rishis, prophets, avatars, Nayanars, Alwars and other deities of both sexes. The conference begins exactly at no time, and amidst loud cheers that Christ rises to deliver his presidential address:

Goddesses, Gods, avatars and prophets,

I feel it my duty of being the youngest of avatars and prophets, the gods present here to express my gratefulness to you for electing me as the president of the conference, though after much opposition. I think it is not necessary to point out to you the importance of this gathering. We have been watching the awful spread of atheism, not only among my people, but also among yours. I hope you will not misunderstand me when I refer to the fact that every one of us should put our heads together to remove this cursed atheism root and branch from the face of the earth. We the creators of the world should no longer allow the cowardly mortals to be constantly abusing us, and to be indulging in undesirable discussions about the very existence of us. Nor should we permit anyone of the human race to forget us entirely, as some are doing among my own people. The reason for this state of affairs lies entirely in the want of unity among us. Unity among Gods is more essential than unity among men. There is no use of quarrelling amongst us, as to who is great and who is small. Whether one belongs to this country or that, it matters very little. Our chief object should be to wipe off the feelings of godlessness from the minds of humanity. Sorry to say this disease has spread, recently in India also. My friend Mr. Shiva should be ashamed of this.

(Mr. Shiva, interrupting, "Withdraw the word, please. Is not the president aware of the recent developments in his own country, Russia?)]

Let not my friend take umbrage at what I said. I am indeed conscious of the predominance of anti-god movements in Russia. I don't deny

also that it is the foremost country in the world which preaches downright atheism. But, I ask you, who is responsible for the existence of this curse? I dare say everyone will join me in proclaiming, it is India.

[Messrs. Shiva, Vishnu and other Hindu Gods interrupting, "Not at all, Mr. President. Our land is the most godly of all other countries in the world. It is your wretched country, the West so to say that has spread this evil".]

That may be I don't deny. My point is, which country is responsible for the very idea of atheism? In this very same assembly is sitting that devilish individual who was the sole cause of this curse. You have not only foolishly given him a place in our midst, but you are all unanimous in acclaiming him as our avatar or incarnation. I refer to our enemy, Buddha, who...

Mr. Buddha (rising up in a corner): Let the president go on with his speech and not indulge in vituperations. I confess I am your enemy, I preached agnosticism to the people just because I realized that it would be a waste to spend the precious life of man in quest of such a big army of gods. I know as a matter of fact, that there cannot be any union among you. For example, the president is disliked by most of the gods assembled here especially those who are said to belong to my country. The president is not unaware of the fact that his movements in India are being watched with suspicion and his growing strength is being condemned by the followers of the gods of India. Not merely that My friend, Mr. Muhammed the prophet, who is sitting in front of me" –

(Mr. Muhammad interrupting, "No personal references please")

He is also aware of the frequent quarrels and deaths that happen between his followers and those of the Hindu gods. The president himself should recollect the amount of blood that was shed as a result of the difference of opinions between the Catholics and Protestants of Mr. President's religion. The fate of the Hindus under Aurangzeb, will not be a pleasing idea to mention before the gods of my country. I foresaw these things even before and that was why I advised the people to leave all of you to yourselves. I told them point blank that it is not worth while to wrangle with one another, for the silly reason of god or religion. I told them that if at all humanity should be brought together, it could be done only by forgetting everything about god or gods.

(The Assembly, interrupting, "No, No, Sit down! Send him out! The Blasphemer!!")

Dear Sir, let me be allowed to have my say. I convinced humanity of the futility of discussing about your existence and of the more important things they have to do in the world. My mission, though discouraged by the Brahmin element, its now bearing is fruits in the far-off Russia, America, Turkey and England. My people, I mean those of India, may be a little dull in recognizing the importance of my teachings, but I am sure other countries of the world have taken my task in right earnest."

The President, continuing, "Do you now see, who is responsible for the spread of Atheism? That is why I hate the Hindu gods – much more so my neighbour Mr. Muhammed".

[Mr. Muhammed starts up in fury and rushes to the President. Messrs. Shiva, Vishnu and others also attack the President. The President uses guns and bombs, while others use bows and knives. There is a fierce fight between all the gods, one attacking the other indiscriminately. The Atmosphere Hall is filled with terrible noises and pitiful groans and the whole town of Vacancy is full of bloodshed. Amidst which Mr. Buddha with a glowing smile descends to the ground to mix with humanity.)

- *Revolt,* 21 July 1929

God Subramanya and King George V

"Pandit Swami .S. Srinivasa Iyengar of Egmore is performing at a high cost Laksharchana, Maha Karpura Homa Puja, Ekadesi Rudrabhishekam and other Huge religious performances and yagams to God Subramanya both as a thanks giving services for the recovery of His Majesty King George V (according to his prediction) and also invoking for his long life. Two things are clear from this. One that he is good at prediction, and the other he is the most loyal of His Majesty's subjects. While doubting how far he will be responsible, as he ought to be, for any future illness of His Majesty, which we do not wish at all, but which all the same is not improbable, as he is also a mortal, we wish to ask one thing. Will the people take note of his powers of prediction? And will the Government remember his name, on the occasion of the next birth day Honours of His Majesty? We expect the answer from God Subramanya himself.

- *Revolt,* 24 November 1929

An Appeal

(By Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam)

To all my humble devotees:

In as much as there is a prospect of a sudden and immediate invasion of my ancient possessions by the iconoclastic Self-respectors, in as much as I fear the capture of my abode and those of my brethren to be utilized for public purposes and as I am afraid that all properties will be cashiered and spent for the commonweal, I issue this appeal on behalf of myself and my numerous relations, to the devoted and humble worshippers to organize a large and the last lottery and gather enough money so that I and my family many leave Srirangam and escape the attack of the army of Self-respecters which is gathering strength with fearful rapidity. We shall seek shelter under the protecting wings of the British Government and shall for ever live happily in the enjoyment of the wealth got through the Lottery. I expect my "face born "sons in Railway and Government services to spare no pains to make the lottery a success.

I am for ever,

Your Lord Creator and Protector

RANGANATHA THE ALMIGHTY

Srirangam

- *Revolt,* 13 February 1929

Beggar Problem

The beggar problem is not peculiar to Ootacamund alone as reported in a previous issue, but throughout India. Perhaps along with an influx of visitors the beggars also have their exodus to the hill for the season. Whether in Ooty or anywhere in India if the beggar problem is to be solved, we should have a Raja of Panagal to take up the question boldly. It is a great pity that any reform which we wish to take up is somehow or other connected with religion.

There are three kinds of beggars, those who are disabled through old age or physically unfit to work, those idle beggars who take to this profession to escape hard work and those able bodied idlers with yellow or kavi cloth.

It is the duty of the state and society at large to supply the bare needs of the first variety of beggars in workhouses. But efforts in this direction will be a failure unless there is a law prohibiting beggary. At the same time something ought to be done with the beggars with kavi cloth before beggary is prohibited by law. Now the trouble arises when we deal with the beggars in the name of religion and any reform in this direction will meet with the usual cry of "religion in danger". A move in this direction is urgent and in course of time the obstacle of religion will give way.

Among the religious beggars, most artful is the temple pujari who trade on the ignorance of the masses and it will indeed take a long time to educate the people to do away the middlemen. Then comes the wandering beggar otherwise called a *byragi* with all his jugglery and he must bear a license i.e. he may be allowed to roam about with a permission from the temple or mutt to which he belongs and his expenses must be met from that mutt or temple and he should not be allowed to beg. This process of licensing religious mendicants will eliminate a great number of pretenders, who if not willing to work, and lead a decent life should be sent to workhouses. Let them work in these places for their livelihood and in spare hours let them meditate or sing in praise of their gods.

Along with the law prohibiting beggary there must be some action taken to punish another set of daylight robbers who exploit the ignorance and superstition of the masses, those who deal with witchcraft. The latter class of people are the worst offenders since they rob the poor. They pretend to cure disease, and enslave God himself within a talisman so that the God may serve the individual and grant him whatever he wants. It is interesting to note how the Soviet Russia deals with religion and their adherents in a new law. By this law, "all existing religious communities must register with the Government within one year; otherwise they will be suppressed."

All churches and organized religious bodies must restrict their activities to the holding of religious services and prayer meetings. They are forbidden to form mutual aid societies, establish libraries, to organize church socials, lecturers, excursions or sewing circles. These methods which have been used by missionaries, especially those of the Baptist church, to win adherents are now placed outside the law.

Ministers and priests, by the new decrees, are tied down to one centre,

and must only conduct services in one church or room, at which they must be registered. Thus itinerant evangelism will be wiped out.

The Roman Catholics are especially affected by the new measures, as they have hitherto persistently refused to register. Registration involves a pledge to obey the laws governing religion.

– *Revolt*, 29 May 1929

One Thousand Names

(M.V.V.K. Rangachari, B.A)

What does the curious word 'alias' signify? A touch of criminology suggests that it is the refuge of the scoundrel to evade the law. The ordinary offender of the state changes his habit, grows an unwanted beard and assumes a different name. If the arm of the law is able to reach him, he comes out with the explanation of the conjunctive "alias" to outwit the detection of his imposture. Indeed, crime and a double-personality do so often go hand in hand that "alias" is the property of a high percentage of thieves and old-offenders.

There is however, a more honest application of the word than the dishonest elusive character usually associated with an "alias". This is more peculiarly apparent among communities that are acquainted with the process of altered parentation, commonly known as adoption. The adoptee assumes in the family of his affiliation a name different to that which the parents that brought him into being assigned to him. And, provided the date of adoption is postponed to a late enough age of the adoptee, there is every chance of his being known by both his name; convenience, nothing more, would suggest the intervention of the divine particle "alias". One uses the adjective *divine* advisedly, for the whole earth oscillates between scoundrellism and divinity.

Cases are further possible not only of human beings transferred from one family into another, but even the gods that once ruled the destinies of a particular tribe were adopting themselves by force of circumstances to a new and different tribe. The romance of the gods is no mere fiction, as the assimilation of cults is a matter of historical importance, giving the clue to the varied phases of civilization. Our wars, conquests, invasions, and ultimate unions are best reflected in the stories told with marvelous power in the epics the puranas, and other sacred books the world over. The victor tribe forced its beliefs on the subdued one,

and the deity of the latter as a rule occupied a subordinate position after the onslaught. The snake-worshipper kneeled down before a god that rode an eagle (Garuda). The moon, which doubtless was at one time an object of worship, later was relegated to the ornamental position on the forehead of Siva. Even the river Ganges, whose fertilizing powers would have captured the admiration of the early Aryan immigrant into worshipping her as an independent goddess acquired a husband in the mountaineer who was not otherwise unprovided with a spouse of his own kin, Parvati, the mountain's daughter. The bull-god latterly dwindled into the sacred animal that carried Iswer on its back. The earth that once must have claimed attention as a goddess *per se* was latterly mated with Vishnu, who was already linked to that mysterious elusive force that mankind names as chance, luck, fortune or LAKSHMI. The very hills become the abode of the gods. Man worshipped animals, rivers, the earth, the moon, the mountain, indeed everything that captured his early imagination and every succeeding epoch of his civilization transformed the object of his worship. The very ornaments and weapons that were put into the hands of his gods and goddesses stand for the age in which humanity had successively lived. The trident spear of the mountaineer, the wheel, of a later period, the mace, the bow, the axe, the plough, on these the march of time is imprinted unmistakably.

Father Himalaya, Goddess Parvati, Ganga, and mendicant Siva typify the early Aryan life of hardihood, in the vicinity of the northern plateau. The Ramayana is the epitome of Aryan excursion into the southernmost point of the peninsula. The clash of two civilizations, Aryan and Dravidian is the main theme of its warfare. The axe of Parasurama stood for the forest-felling age. The bow of Shrirama vanquished what must have been in that age a less successful form of culture. And later Balaram, plough in hand, revealed the power of the soil and brother Krishna is associated with pasturage of cattle, milk and butter in a peaceable age, which however ran into the later Mahabharata. Thousands of years, myriads of generations, of humanity, age dawning upon age, god ruling over god, peace and war, destruction, production, assimilation, this, in substance, marks our conception of the past.

Where does the idea of giving a name begin? What was the first thing that was ever given any name? It is wonder, it is mystery, in other words, it is god. Man did not first name the thing that he knew anything about. For it needed no Namakaranam (*naming ceremony – editors*) at

his hand. And he did not stand in need of naming it either, for, name or no name, he knew it already. What he was at pains to name was the nameless. The ununderstood, that with reference to which he was ignorant. To name any particular thing would first require a definition, and that involved abstract thought and imagination. To surmount ignorance, therefore, man began inventing names, and with them he, labeled and docketed. The first name he ever could have coined in wonder ever eludes his grasp, his power of definition, his desire to understand, in other words, a single object by a single name. Time and the march of events add to his difficulty. With every brain, that first is renewed. And each new wonder alters the content of the primary idea. If our knowledge is expanding, with it our difficulties too are on the increase. To seek to name the nameless is a fruitless task. Let the thousand names that time wrought into its texture remain intact. Let the Sahasra Nama roll for ever. The shades of illusion increase with the number of lights that come into being on this diversified globe. When all the lights unite in reason, then is this earth properly lit. Until then, adding up the cults, multiplying names, the pile of history goes on a thousand –fold into the one thousand names.

- *Revolt*, 25 August 1929

On the 'Pilgrim Line'

The Railway Companies in India are busy with the task of the priests in the propagation of religion. They take advantage of the religious scruples of the people and want to derive as much benefit out of it as they could. They know for certain that the people of India can be made to dance at the will of the priestly class. They know that the religious drug has been so strongly administered to the people that they cannot easily shake themselves out of it. They are therefore bent upon exacting as much as they could from the people, before they come to the realization of the deceit played upon them.

The Railway authorities seem to have a greater care for our religion than even the priests. We see glaring advertisements in all stations, exhorting the people to have either a religious trip to Benares, or a pious pilgrimage to Rameswaram. "Visit the Palni Hills", they piteously appeal; "Have a trip to Srirangam", they sincerely declare; "Perform Sraddh at Rameswaram", they cautiously announce; "Have you seen Kandri (*a ritual associated with Nagore's sufi shrine – editors*) at Nagore?"

they anxiously ask. Big wall posters with illustrations of "A City of Festivals", which ought to be seen before we die, or "The Holy Beacon", which must be missed on no account, are seen in battle-array as if challenging the intellect of the people. Cheap return tickets are promised, and excellent means of conveyance are ensured. A list of places where people are fed for nothing is also given. And to crown all, a "pilgrim car" will be run very cheap.

Some of these centres of "pilgrimage" need some explanation to our foreign readers, as it will give a rough idea of the mentality of the people who flock to these places in the name of religion. Srirangam comes foremost in the list of the holy places of pilgrimage. A small town, which may be more properly called a village, is reputed to be the dwelling place of Sri Ranganatha, (God Vishnu).

The prominent appearance of the ditches coupled with the concomitant music of the million numbered mosquitoes resulting in the production of a large number of living monuments of elephantiasis and its co-partners are the age-long features of the "holy" place of Sri Ranganatha. Once in every year, on the occasion of the god's receiving the people *en bloc* to his abode in Vaikundam, there is such an over crowd for a week that all the Health Inspectors of the vicinity have to direct their attention to the "holy pilgrims", to concert preventive measures from ailments due to an over dose of piety. The week elapses and the "abode of Vishnu" is left in the condition of what the mythology depicts the opposite of Heaven, while others lead a life that is never envied by the non-pilgrims. The Railway Companies get a few crores and there is an end on it.

There is another of the "holy" places, which has a periodical influx of people. The "Palni Hill," for which the South Indian Railway Company has recently invested a large sum to conduct its "religious" business, is the place where queer things take place in the name of religion. People rush to the place full haired and return bald-headed. That is a God which has a singular fascination for the human hair. The "pilgrims," even women included (no Brahmins, mind that!) have a clean shave, and return home after giving the hair offerings to the "God of the Hills." Not merely that. The pilgrims take with them pots of milk which is poured on the idol of the "God" either to run in streams and join the main ditches (which the pilgrims rarely leave unused) or to be resold to the coffee hotels with a harmonious mixture of oil and other dirts forming part of the image. The worst part of the affair is the

circus feats of the "pilgrims." They pierce their tongues, cheeks, hands and body with hooks, needles and pins and dance about with Kavadi on the shoulders. Religion was termed by Col. Ingersoll as an intoxicating drink, which often keeps its possessor out of his senses. The truth cannot be illustrated better than from the dance of the pilgrims at Palni. A toddy shop in an Indian Village is no worse that this habitation of God Subramanya. The Saravana Poigai, in which the pilgrims bathe, is a dirty little pool the like of which cannot be imagined even by the writer of "Mother India". A pious, deep plunge into this thirtham (holy water) which forms an important part of the pilgrimage gives a finishing touch to the barbarity of the worship. The pilgrims return loaded with the benedictions of disease and become eternal patrons to the briefless doctors. Lord Subramanya affects an increase of a few lakhs in the monthly income of the Railway Companies.

These are only some of the numerous instances of how the Railway authorities do their business at the expense of the people's ignorance. It is indeed a pity that the people do not weigh the material advantages and disadvantages that accrue from their "pious pilgrimages." They do not realize the naked fact that the Railway authorities are as much interested in our spiritual welfare as the priests are. The priests composed songs and wrote Shastra's and Puranas in praise of the "holy places" just as Railway authorities vex eloquent on "the City of Eternal Cheer," or "Dashing Kais" or the "Royal City" or the "Eternal city of Salvation". The Railway guides, Time-tables and illustrated posters are the puranas of the Railway authorities. Both the priests and the Railway Companies are equally interested in the salvation of the people. If the priests tempt you by the assurance of Moksha, the Railway authorities also try the same weapon. They invite you to go to Mayavaram for the *Thula Snanam* (*a sacred bath – editors*) as if they do not wish you to lose the chance of Moksha. That is the way how they start the business; and they can keep the pot boiling if some at least fall into their trap.

We don't mean to blame the Railway authorities. For, as long as there is gullibility in the people, it is no wonder there will be some to make use of it. At least there should be a sense of shame in our people that foreigners will laugh at our preserve-at-a-high-cost-religion a manifestation of which is advertised on the platforms of all Railway Stations. When will the people feel it?

- *Revolt*, 10 November 1929

2 RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE STATE

2.1 Amanullah's Afghanistan

Advance Afghanistan!

India is watching with sympathy and hope the progress of the reform movement inaugurated across her borders by King Amanulla. A great deal has already has been said about the rapid strides made by Afghanistan in industrial organisation. Ambitious schemes for the development of roads, railway, motor and air transports are being pushed through at a terrific pace. Machinery has been planted and is worked by electric power for the manufacture of matches, sugar and other necessaries so as to make Afghanistan a self-supporting Nation. It is genuine economic progress and not mere splendour that is aimed at. As an example we may quote the order of the king that wooden poles should be used as telegraph posts wherever they could be had sufficiently cheap. We may contrast this with the action of the South Indian and other Railways in our country which are undermining our timber trade by substituting imported iron sleepers for indigenous wooden ones.

Educational progress is keeping pace with industrial advancement. According to a statement by Mr. Syed Qasim Khan, the retiring Consul General in India, "a net work of schools has sprung up all over the country and there is feverish demand for education from all classes of people. The craving for knowledge has created a love of travel and a stream of people has gone to see many parts of the world."

The women of Afghanistan have determined to win their emancipation. They are taking active part in public affairs and have formed a society, the "Anjuman-I-Himay-t-I-Niswan" to organize and safeguard their interests. They have voluntarily discarded the purdha; the state has not had to adopt compulsion in this matter and ladies who prefer to go about veiled are not interfered with. An increasing number of Afghan women are taking to the professions and to work in factories.

The Afghan Government has taken some distinctive steps which may serve as examples to the Indian Government. Mr. Qasim Khan says,

"Our King has leveled all human beings in Afghanistan by abolishing all titles, decorations and ceremonial dresses because all Afghan subjects are equal and alike, being members of a big homogeneous family. It is inequitable to give titles and decorations to some and deprive the others. Moreover, the question of cost to the State and individuals concerned count a great deal. The money spent in making coloured dresses and decorations and maintaining titles can more usefully be employed for the National weal." What inspiring thoughts these are for our constitution mongers!

But even Afghanistan has her troubles. The "mad Mullas" of whom the King spoke at Bombay, depending on the ignorance and religious fanaticism of the populace, are opposing the reform movement. In Afghanistan, as in India, vested interests are alarmed at the spread of knowledge and understanding among the people and are therefore assembling the forces of darkness to fight the efforts to usher in the dawn of a new era. We have frequent reports of pious mullas preaching sedition to the people and setting up political and family intrigues against their sovereign. The patriot king can be depended to put down these agitations by firm but nevertheless humane measures. India in tribulation cannot lend a helping hand to her sister beyond the Khyber but she sends a heartfelt prayer for the success of light and reason against the forces of darkness and ignorance.

- *Revolt*, 7 November 1928

The Setback

We have drawn attention in these columns to the dangers underlying the policy of hustling imitation pursued by the Afghan Amir. The eyes of the whole world were reverted to the heroic efforts of the young king who struggled hard to modernize an illiterate and superstitious people. Priestcraft all the world over was dismayed and reformers were overjoyed at the rapid steps towards progress taken by a people hitherto considered primitive and uncivilized. The sympathies of India and of Eastern peoples generally were actively with the Amir. Had the reforming Zeal of the Afghans been yoked to the carving out of practical measures calculated to consolidate the progressive elements in the country, and had a portion of the new found ardor been utilized to the task of propaganda among the people whose lives are vitally affected by the promulgation of these reforms, there would not have occurred the crash announced in the following message from Peshawar dated

the 11th instant:-

"The "Aman-i-Afghan," newspaper of Kabul, publishes a proclamation of the King of Afghanistan, withdrawing nearly the whole of his programme of reforms. The Afghan girls sent to Turkey for education will be recalled. Orders for the adoption of European dress and for the unveiling of women are cancelled. Girls' Schools and Women's Associations are closed. Soldiers may become followers of Pirs without permission. Certificates of identity and conscription are withdrawn. Friday will again become a weekly holiday. A Mejlis-i-Afghan or Council of Notables is formed, consisting of 50 of the Ulemas, Sirdars, Khans and officials. This Council will amend laws in accordance with the Shariat and will review the decisions of the newly constituted Mejlis-i-Vukkala, or Council of Provincial Representatives. The proclamation is signed by prominent Ulemas, including the Chief Kazi, Mahomed Akbar and Huzmat Sahib, of Short Buzzard."

We do hope that the above account is premature. It perhaps, exaggerates the extent of the king's defeat. However, the chances of such catastrophic reaction ought to serve as an eye-opener to reformers in our own country. We are yet to learn the lesson that there is no short cut to freedom and progress. There is no avoiding the tedious and unexacting task of getting into living contact with the apathetic masses of the poor and the ignorant. Afghanistan has attained absolute political freedom, but she cannot get rid of the "mad mullah". We find on the other hand, a 'Council of Notables' formed which is dominated by Ulemmas whose madness has gained a new lease of life. Turning the perspectives nearer home, we shall discover that India may attain to 'Independence' without gathering the strength to cast aside the dominance of the "holy Brahman". Such 'Independence' will be as unreal as the freedom of Afghanistan if the threatened 'Council of Notables' overtakes it. We shall be wise therefore, if we get to work immediately and engage ourselves on the task of awakening our people to a sense of their social degradation and enlisting their active support to the movement of National regeneration.

- *Revolt*, 16 Janaury 1929

Reformer or King?

King Amanulla has abdicated. But Reformer Amanulla has not. When the "mad" Mullas roused the frontier population to the frenzy of rebellion and the intriguing foreign Powers supplied them with the

arms and ammunitions needed, King Amanulla was face to face with civil war. Amanulla is a warrior: he strode the international stage as the Warrior King and claimed the admiration of the world and his talk of the war of Independence that he fought against Britain sent a thrill round India, Egypt and all the subject Nations of the earth. But his strength he reserves to be exercised against his enemies. Towards his own people, misled by the Mullas and infected with their madness, he displays infinite compassion. A soldier, but yet he shudders to shed blood. A patriot, he has not the heart to butcher his countrymen. Towards the rebels he displays such self control and ability to self sacrifice that are rarely given to war lords placed in similar circumstances. He is non-violent. But his non-violence is not that variety born of impotence which is frequently met with in India. He has a strong, disciplined and loyal army behind him. But he deliberately stays his hand. His non-violence is born of his strength. He could preserve his throne if he would permit the flow of the blood of his subjects. But he takes the humane course and abdicates.

There has scarcely been another King in the history of the world besides Gautama Buddha who could rise to such heights of benevolent sympathy for the suffering of the people at large. Even as the great Siddhartha, Amanulla has discarded a throne in obedience to an inner call to serve humanity. Amanulla's advocacy of *Ahimsa* is strangely reminiscent of the words of the founder of that religion of Mercy which has gained the largest number of adherents of all religions. Says Amanulla to his subjects who have revolted: "Is it not proof of my sympathy towards you that although I have at my disposal several aeroplanes, I have not as yet ordered them to throw shells against you"? He is a messenger of peace and asks his co-religionists: "Are you not ordained by your religion to regard all Muslims as your brothers? If so, why do you consider it to be legal to kill them?"

That the Afghans stand in need of such teaching is well proved by the bloody events of the rebellion. The Afghan tribesmen are an illiterate and a superstitious people. They worship the Mullas and carry out their behests to the very letter. The Mullas are as illiterate and ignorant as the tribesmen themselves. The Afghans have their parallel in our own country in the Moplahs of the Malabar Coast. The Afghan is as much subject to the influence of the Mulla as the Moplah is to that of the Thangal. The "madness" of the Mulla is matched by the bigotry of the Thangal. The Afghans are now probably in that same misguided

fervour of fanaticism in which the Malabar rebellion found the Moplahs. Bacha-i-Sachao is probably another Kunhi Ahmed Haji. There is this difference: A Foreign Government put down the Moplahs with a strong hand. Amanulla has the resources to deal strongly with the Shinwaris. But he has also a soft heart: he stays his army from overrunning the rebel territory, he orders his aeroplanes not to decimate the mutinous villages, and he abdicates. Is he wise? Is display of non-violence against insolence ever wise? Can *Ahimsa* cure ignorance and superstition? Time alone will show.

The devotion to his wife was a rare example of chivalry. Queen Souria led the woman's movement for emancipation and incurred the displeasure of the Mullas who scented danger to their religious hegemony if a queen would lead the women to revolt against priest craft. Her courageous discarding of the purdha increased the ire of these deputies of God. The Mullas displayed a mean sense of vindictiveness when they demanded of the Amir the banishment of the queen as a term in the peace settlement. Amanulla gave them the answer that an honourable man should give.

Amanulla has cast off the kingdom of Agfhanistan. But he has thereby acquired a kingdom as wide as humanity itself. He has kicked off a throne but he has got enthroned in the hearts of all freedom loving people the whole world over. His temporal power was but a hindrance to the carrying on of the high mission he has undertaken. The tinsel robes of the king obstructed free intercourse with the people. He has doffed the armour which draws blood. He has donned the mantle which spreads the light. Amanulla leads humanity in its struggle against the tyranny of established tradition and the sway of age long superstition sanctified as religion. He is the hope of the rising East which has cast off its spiritual slumber and has awakened to a sense of its secular rights. He is the symbol of the oriental who has discarded his other-worldliness and has girded up his loins to fight for his fair share of the good things of the earth.

The king was worsted by the Mullas but the Reformer cannot be. The tribesmen could be inflamed into armed rebellion against their king. But against a Reformer the rebel arms are powerless. The Reformer has to be met not by bullets but by arguments. Reformer Amanulla will force the Afghans to think; and that will be the end of the domination of the mad Mulla.

In a message to the rebels Amanulla assures them that he has not discarded his religion. It is high compliment to Islam, but great Reformers always adopt such language. Baghavan Buddha never disowned Hinduism though his teaching was a negation of all religion as such. If Islam has the capacity to be reformed to the extent desired by Amanulla, it will easily serve as the universal religion. Reformers in India will not hesitate to enter the Islamic fold if that religion passes the test prescribed by Amanulla and abolishes the Mulla once and for ever. But will Islam rise to the occasion? Let the Muslims of the world answer.

- *Revolt*, 23 January 1929

Mullas' Demands

The following are the eighteen demands which the Afghan Mullas placed before King Amanulla. These demands are the bases of the rebellion which they managed to stir up among the illiterate and superstitious tribes-men.

(1) The organization of the Senate of fifty members composed of a majority of Mullahs and the remainder of renowned persons which will be supreme in all matters civil, military and religious; (2) Introduction of lawyers; (3) Conformity by the King and Royal Family to Muslim usages; (4) recall of girls sent to Turkey for medical education; (5) liberty to priests of the Deoband College in India to enter Afghanistan freely; (6) reintroduction of strict purdah regulations; (7) abolition of conscription; (8) freedom of movement to Mullas; (9) punishment of drinking alcoholic spirits; (10) recognition of Friday as a holiday ; (11) prohibition of European dress for women; (12) freedom of school boys to marry; (13) revival of homages to holy men of the country by the people; (14)freedom of the people to engage in money lending: (15) suspension of girls' education; (16) freedom of dress to men; (17) enforcement of strict punishment for cases of bribery both for giver and receiver; (18) abolition of all restrictive regulations concerning Mullahs and recognition of the right of Mullahs to stop any subject and question him on the holy law and punish him.

- *Revolt*, 23 January 1929

King Amanullah's Statement: Religion Not the Reason

We extract the following from the interview of Ex-King Amanulla with the Associated Press, in which he gives a connected account of the events in Afghanistan:-

I emphatically contradict the rumour that owing to the defeat of my forces I left Afghanistan. It is absolutely baseless. I consider myself unsuccessful because of treachery and the faithlessness of the Andheris and on the part of the Taraks, Otaks, and Tokhis.

It is quite an obvious fact that from the beginning of the Shinwari rising up to the time the revolt spread throughout the whole of the Eastern and the Northern provinces, I ordered my troops not to attack anywhere but instead continuously sent representatives to the rebels and tried with my utmost capacity to settle the affairs peacefully. The revolt was not based upon any good foundation whatsoever. Rebels were against my ideas and considered them to be contrary to their own moral ideals and national traditions. All these matters had been discussed at Loi Jirga consisting of 1107 representatives of the whole country and were almost unanimously settled and passed by them but as all my advice and proclamation of general amnesty did not produce any effect and the intrigues of those who were interested at first, and afterwards afraid lest their evil deeds should betray them, continued.

I have never had the idea that just to regain my sovereignty I should allow and be the cause of sanguinary civil war. Owing to this principle I relinquished the throne and left Afghanistan. Throughout the campaign my army had not encountered any force that could withstand it or get victory over it. Our forces had never been defeated by the enemy and in not even a single action has my army retreated or stepped backwards. I again repeat that it was only my principle and repugnance for bloodshed which obliged me to renounce my throne and be an exile from my country. It was never my desire to allow the Afghan nation to fight among themselves to their own ruin for my personal advantage. This was the reason for my unexpected arrival.

Although personally I was unsuccessful, my principle will never be a failure in Afghanistan, for, I am sure that during the ten years of my hard labour and efforts I have at least succeeded in developing the mentality that will never allow Afghanistan to remain in this condition.

I therefore left the field to those who pretend to be the champions of religion and adduce it as an excuse for their self- interest and thus have reduced Afghanistan to its present plight. Everyone is well aware of the condition of Kabul and how religion is treated there. It will soon be known that behind the scene there was nothing but self-interest and ignorance. *Otherwise the cause of religion has nothing in common with the existing condition of affairs in Afghanistan.*

- *Revolt*, 5 June 1929

Amanullah – the Great

(by P.C.P.)

What if he has lost a kingdom? Many an Empire has, ere now, been lost, has bitten the dust, for causes and for things which do not count with humanity. As our Omar Khayyam the Persian poet, has sung:-

i) *They say the Lion and the Lizard keep*

The Courts where Janshy'd gloried and drank deep;

And Bahram, that great Hunter - the Wild Ass

Stamps o'er his Head and he lies fast asleep.

ii) Think , in this batter'd Caravanserai

Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day

How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp

Abode his Hour or two and went his way .

Amanullah renounced a kingdom because he was not prepared to sacrifice his self-respect, his honour, his ideal of manhood. His subjects called upon him to go back to Purdah, to give up his beloved Queen Sowriya; to accept all the superstitions which the Mullahs dictated. A lesser man would have eaten the dust. Prouder princes have succumbed to the glamour and glitter of royal pageantry even if it were really a prison. But not Amanallah, the Lion-hearted. Who would have made such a sacrifice today? A Gautama Buddha did it in days of yore and today after the lapse of two thousand five hundred years, the Buddha's Empire is the mightiest in the world. What was the terrible alternative which faced the prince then?

Choose then,

The way of greatness or the way of good;
To reign a King of Kings or wander lone
Crownless and homeless, that the world be helped.

And what was the reply which the Great Enlightened gave?

I will not have that Crown
Which may be mine; I lay aside those realms
Which wait the gleaming of my naked sword;
My chariot shall not roll with bloody wheels
From victory to victory, till earth
Wears the red record of my name. I choose
To tread its paths with patient stainless feet
Making its dust my bed, its loneliest wastes
My dwelling and its meanest things my mates
Clad in no prouder garb than out-castes wear
Fed with no meats save what the charitaon
Give of their will, sheltered by no more pomp
Than the dim cave lends, or the jungle bush.

Then Asoka and Amanullah – only three in all history !

Whether Amanullah is going to win back his Kingdom or is going to lose it for ever, as Sir Taj Bahadur Sapru indicated it, no concern of the reformer or the humanitarian. If he has lost a petty principality, he has won at the same time a mighty empire to rule over – an empire of warm and loving hearts of all sorts of colour and creed and caste. Amanullah is the incarnation of the chivalry and the spirit of young Asia. The mighty sacrifice which Amanullah made, first for the noble cause of womanhood and next for the sacred cause of humanity, quickens even the slave's pulse as nothing in history, ancient or modern. His name has already been inscribed in full on the scroll of Fame.

What is Napoleon? "A thing so mean" as Byron put it. What are Caesars and Alexanders? Where are they? Where do they stand now? Their souls are on a pilgrimage to the Limbs of Forgotten things.

Amanullah has fired the imagination of the Youth of India as neither a

Mussolini nor even a Mustapha Kemal Pasha has done. In all the wide world today, there is no peer for Amanullah the great.

- *Revolt*, 14 July 1929

2.2 Modern Turkey

Emulation vs. Imitation

There is rivalry going on between Turkey and Afghanistan as to which among the two countries would succeed earlier in adapting the manners and customs of their people to the new ideal of a freer and richer life. Musthapha Kamal Pasha, the president of the new republic of Turkey and the young Amir of Afghanistan are running a close race in the reordering of their respective countries to suit the new idea. The attempt is so well intentioned that we in India not only wish our neighbours god-speed but regret that we in our own country have not the command of those summary measures of effecting reforms among an illiterate and apathetic people. Both Turkey and Afghanistan have abolished the purdha and emancipated their women. Both are well on the way to a secularization of their national life. Turkey has done away with the Khilafat. The revolt of the "mad mullas" on the Afghan frontier is but the final flaming of the dying embers of religious supremacy in that country.

Such successful emulation of the action of the free people of the world makes us envy the good fortune of the peoples across our borders. But a closer scrutiny of the features of this process of Europeanisation reveals an element of unthinking and servile imitation of the manners and customs of the European people that makes us fairly skeptical of the future of this movement. We had occasion in these columns to refer to the action of the Afghan King in insisting on the wearing of European costume by all people who would appear in the streets of his capital. This is an unnecessary and wholly unwarranted interference against the liberty of the people to dress in the manner best suited to their tastes and their needs. A cable to *The Hindu* from Constantinople dated the 12th instant, says:-

"The Government has decided that Turks must adopt a family name in addition to the surnames borne by them at present. The absence of family names has often led to a great confusion as surnames are not abundant, never original and are mostly drawn from the Koran and relate to some attribute of the Almighty. Therefore it is usually necessary to distinguish two men of the same name by mentioning the place of origin, trade or characteristic feature. A case occurred recently of one

of the Tribunals of Independence in which all were Alis and the Deputies were distinguished by the names of their constituencies."

The method followed in Turkey regarding the naming of individuals is similar to that in many parts of our country and is identical with that obtaining in South India. The family as such has no distinguishing name. The caste or rather the sub caste has its name: Mudaliar, Pillai, Naidu, Iyer, Iyengar etc. which are tacked on after the name with which the parents baptize a person with. But such surnames have no significance since the same caste has different surnames and the same surname is assumed by members belonging to different castes. Again as a distinguishing mark these caste names are worse than useless because there are hundreds of thousands of adherents to each surname. There is thus a healthy movement growing among the younger generation to drop out these surnames altogether.

We are then face to face with the very real danger that Turkey has to battle with. How many are our Ramas, Krishnas, Gopalas and Govindas! What is the remedy? The way out suggested by the Turkish Government in slavish imitation of Europe is not the best. It burdens a person with two names whereas he had previously only one. Again there is no virtue in calling all the members of one family by a single name. The family name forces a person to wear his father's name whereas he may like to forget his ancestry and begin his life on a clean slate. The family name forces a woman to adopt the name of her husband's family which is a perpetuation of the inferiority of woman. The difficulty about duplications must be avoided by inventing new names. After all a name is intended as a distinguishing mark. Its usefulness consists in its certainty and its fixity. If the Registrar of births is given the right to approve of or amend names suggested by parents the difficulty would vanish. He would see to it that there will be no disconcerting frequency of the same name in the same area. This procedure is neither novel nor impractical. We do it now with the post office with reference to telegraphic addresses. The birth register may usefully take a leaf out of the Telegraphic Code and avoid the difficulty which is exercising the mind of the Turkish Government.

Family names are a relic of the barbarous days when Europeans practiced ancestor worship European families believed that they sprang out of animals or material objects: a wolf or hog or a stone. They idolized such ancestors and bore their name. When Europeans became

ashamed of their mythical ancestors, they did not give up the habit of naming themselves after ancestors but they changed their spelling of their names. Mr. Wolf spelt his name Wolffe. Mr. Hogg signed himself Hogge. Mr. Green became Greene and so on. It is not necessary for Turkey to revert to this barbarity in an attempt to import the European order of things within her borders. Courageous emulation of the spirit of freedom in the West is one thing and a slavish imitation of the details of European superstition is another and just the opposite. Let us hope that in the new found ardour for progress, Young Turkey will take to the one and avoid the other.

- *Revolt*, 19 December1928

Modern Turkey

The Welfare writes: The 'Sick Man' suddenly drops his bundle of vices, prejudices, backwardness etc., straightens his crooked limbs and takes to the high roads, leading to youth,glory,achievement and prosperity at a run. Call it denationalisation, Europeanisation, slavish imitation or what you like, but there is no denying the fact that Turkey has finally shaken off her inertia of centuries and has covered at a bound enough ground to bring it in line with at least the second class powers of Europe in national organization. In moral recovery of discipline, Turkey has left the greatest of Euro-American powers far behind; for the latter are, however much we may deny the fact, in the melting pot of yet newer revolutions, their national minds have been split up into something resembling the chaotically unstable multiple personality found in degenerate individuals. Turkey on the other hand, is self-possessed, has a definite end to achieve, and is moving determinedly – an entire nation thinking, feeling and acting as one man towards her goal of ideal nationhood *in the light of modern knowledge*.

Looking at Turkey's transition, one may well call it Europeanisation, if only superficialities are considered. The Turk is discarding his old ways and is taking to European dress, architecture, music, art, social, legal, political and economic institutions and is enthusiastically parading his European get up as a proud school boy in his first pair of long pants.

Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha is the soul and brain of the New Turkey of today. Under his guidance and command Turks are organising their entire scheme of existence anew. The part that even Koran and the Shariat shall play in their life is being settled by the Ghazi and his

enthusiastic band of reformers. No more of authority but ethics, no more of gospel but truth, no more of faith but science and technology, shall guide the life of young Turkey. The Ghazi has spoken and all Turks are straining themselves to the limit to realize his ideals. Thus Turkish children are being co-educated and fed on a dietetic basis and being initiated into the cult of the play-ground. Turkey will have to fight Waterloos and it is fast building up its Etons and Harrows.

With so-called religion, Turkey, i.e., Kemal Pasha has little to do. His religion is his nation and his Zihad will be the defence of glory of his nation. Foreign missions and their teaching institutions are in disfavour with Kemal Pasha. They preach false ideals to Turkey's youth and they can never fall in line with the aspiration of Nationalist Turkey. So they are passing out of Turkish life. The most important feature of the change in Turkey is the emancipation of women. They are today taking an active share of work of nation building, specially in public health work. They are also mixing freely with men in tea parties and dances, but health, hygiene, education and the arts are drawing more of their energy and attention. Then there is the question of dress. In this, of course, the whole of Turkey has gone to Europe

– Revolt, 27 March 1929

Advance Turkey!

Elsewhere in this issue is published an article about mixed marriages which are in vogue in Turkey which once fought for the righting of the Khilafat wrongs has today discarded its religion altogether and is imbibing the spirit of western civilization in its entirety. It has gone so far in its work of Europeanisation, that there is a free intermingling of marriages between Turkey and other European countries. Eminent medical experts have often emphasized upon the fact that free intermixture of blood between different races results in the production of a beautiful and healthy race. That is corroborated by the writer's remark that 'Egyptian blood has imparted traits of physique and feature which have made the women of the Turkish upper classes, some of the loveliest women in the world'. When the religion of Islam which is well-known for its puritanic fervour has launched upon the bold policy of inter-marriages, it is a wonder why the so called tolerant religion of Hinduism is lacking behind even in inter-caste marriages. Turkey the proverbial 'sickman of Europe' is marching at a rapid space, whereas

India the proverbial 'country of wealth and prosperity', is wallowing in the filth of inter-communal quarrels and inter-caste dissensions. Will India learn from her neighbour?

- *Revolt,* 7 July 1929

Mixed Marriages in Turkey

It is a mistake to suppose that there has always been a prejudice in Turkey against Turks marrying foreigners and even Christians. There is indeed probably no nation which has so continuously nourished itself by the admixture of foreign blood, writes the Constantinople correspondent of the 'Manchester Guardian'.

For several centuries the civilized nations of the West have brought less and less foreign blood into their stock. But a nation like Turkey, which has remained medieval till today, kept up the much freer racial intermingling which was characteristic of the smaller societies of the Middle Ages everywhere. In the older days, when concubinage was practiced, it was mostly Caucasian women from the Caucasus who became the pasha's favourites and mixed in the end into the Turkish nation. It is this strain which produces today the most striking types of Turkish feminine beauty. Egyptian blood which has been so generously brought in has imparted traits of physique and feature which have made the woman of the Turkish upper classes some of the loveliest women in the world. During the whole period of this admixture there has been no prejudice whatever against the foreign women whom Turks took as wives and though it was less frequent it was just as allowable for Turkish women to marry foreign men; the only thing that was insisted upon socially was that the foreigners should change their faith. But in general it was through foreign women converted to Islam that the perpetual renovation of the Turkish blood was maintained. The fashion in Russian wives, so to speak, is still as strong as ever, and many of the Russian women refugees who came into Turkey six or seven years ago are now married into prominent Turkish houses. Lately, too many Greek women have become the wives of Turks.

Till now the possible 'alien' dangers which are liable to rise from mixed racial marriages have been ignored. The conversion to Islam was accepted as a sufficient patriotic guarantee and was indeed regarded only in this light and not as a real religious change. As modern Turkey, however, has become secularist and leaves religion free this guarantee

no longer exists and another form of control has had to be devised.

Without in any way wishing to put a stop to the custom of foreign marriages among the nation, the Angora authorities have only laid down the rule that no Turkish State functionary marrying a foreign wife can keep his post in the Civil Service. Admixture of blood in modernized Turkey is only to go on outside the State service, and there will be no necessary change of faith.

- *Revolt*, 7 July 1929

Freedom of Turkish Women

Kemal Pasha is praised by a weekly journal for his efforts at making Turkish woman free. Before his reforms, they were prisoners in the home, never leaving it except under guard and with their faces muffled. They could not attend a concert or dance, nor take healthy exercise. To-day they are encouraged to move about freely without the unwholesome veil. Thy may enter any of he professions, and may work in shops and offices. Instead of being mere playthings for men, they are becoming real companions. It may be added that the subjection of women in Turkey was owing to the influence of religion. Opposition to the reforms has invariably been fomented by the priests and their supporters. Not so many years ago, in Christian England, the subjection of women was pretty thorough. Let it not be forgotten that the men who protested against it and worked to alter it, were, in the main, Freethinkers. The freedom now enjoyed by women was not won for them by Christian churches or priests. On the contrary, these supplied the opposition to the innovations proposed. Only as Christian notions about woman have lost their hold has she been enabled to discard her chains. By the way, we notice that the leaders of the women's freedom organizations never mention these facts. Are they afraid of offending the parsons? If so, then there is another bit of freedom that Freethinkers will win for them freedom from dominance or priests.

- *Revolt*, 11 August 1929

2.3 Soviet Experiments in Atheism

Marriage in Russia

Mr. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya writes in "*The People*":

"Even that most superstitious institution of all, namely, *Marriage*, has been done away with. Those who have been taught priest obeisance and church worship would naturally imagine this to be a calamity. But let them not imagine that Marriage in Russia being abolished, chaos and immorality reign in its place. On the contrary there is a more sensible law that binds man and woman together than the stupid enforced law of *legalized prostitution* which we politely call marriage in India and elsewhere! It is the law of freedom – and comradeship in the strongest bond of all! I have not seen healthier men and women nor known of a healthier attitude towards life's deepest problems such as sex as I have known in Russia and the Germany of to-day.

- ***Revolt***, 26 December 1928

Anti-God Campaign in Russia

A cable to the Hindu from Riga, dated 7th January says:-

The Conference at Moscow of the Anti-God Society has decided that the failure of the recent campaign against holding any religious ceremonies during Christmas is largely due to the belatedness of the Government and agreed to renew the agitation immediately in order that efforts may be more successful at Easter.

The Society has appealed to the Soviet organizations to do the utmost to assist in carrying out special anti-religious campaign during the next three months. The Central Committee of Workers' Union has instructed its local branches fully to support the movement.

The Moscow Trade Unions have contributed 5,000 roubles to the Atheistic Labour Journal to enable it to print and distribute among workers a quantity of literature directed against the Clergy.

- ***Revolt,* 9 January 1929**

Determined to Uproot Religion

"There are millions of religious believers and only thousands of the Godless" but we shall uproot religion and destroy its influence with the masses, comments *Pravda* in a leading article, concerning the Congress of the Society of the Godless, which 800 delegates attended. M. Maxim Gorky, the Russian novelist was on the platform and was given an ovation. Many Soviet leaders were present. (*Pravda*, our readers are aware, is the official publicity organ of the Soviet Republic).

- *Revolt*, 3 June 1929

Atheistic Propaganda in Russia

The exact manner and methods of propaganda work in Soviet Russia, writes Corinna in *The Freethinker* depends upon the members of the Atheist clubs and the local circumstances, each group working out its own methods. Generally, however, the work done for the Freethought Movement is closely connected with the work on the political side. It is quite different to the case in England, where politics are not the concern of the Freethought world. Here the men and women who still uphold their religious ideals are the enemies of the existing political system and under the disguise of religious work are engaged in working against the present political powers. This makes it necessary for the political power to combine anti-religious work very closely with political work, and the future of the country, in the eyes of the political body depends upon the close co-operation of the Atheist Movement with the political side.

In the villages the Atheist Union Branch works by means of easily recognized methods towards socialistic ends. For example, there will be members organizing agricultural experiments, model farms and teaching the peasants in co-operative methods and every success is naturally made a piece of propaganda for 'Atheist' methods. To understand this, you must remember that there are still peasants who pray to God for rain and sunshine. So each success in material things is made the point of Atheist propaganda and the results of thus combining political and Atheist work have had very great success.

Also we consider that the propagation of Atheism is not the task of merely the Atheist Union, but of all the people. The Atheist Union is only the leader. Following out this idea, the Atheist groups often arrange

different forms of propaganda with other bodies such as the trade unions, International Workers Help Association and others. During the day devoted to international co-operation festivities, we arrange with the co-operative bodies to propagate secular ideas amongst the religious co-operators. There is one great difference between the English propaganda work and the Russian. Ours is always socially directed to the mass, individual work is carried on but not on the scale of the mass readings, mass film propaganda, mass processions, rambles, anti-religious carnivals etc. To effect this we have to prepare very carefully. Every group of the Atheist Union arranges anti-religious study circles in the factory, the village, the office, etc. On a larger scale there are the summer schools, courses to prepare the necessary reports and statistics and courses to instruct lecturers and leaders of the study groups.

By thus organizing in local groups we can use every incident or every example that comes our way. We carefully point out the influence of religion on professional and technical problems, demonstrate the effect of freedom from religious ties on the labourer, and not only reach the literate worker, but what is more important., the worker who is not necessarily a student, but who can learn from practical experience.

- *Revolt,* 21 July 1929

Sunday in Russia

One of the most amazing things yet achieved, or attempted, by Soviet Russia, has just been officially decreed by the Council of Commissars. It is nothing less than "the nationalization of Sunday" – the sweeping away of all distinction between sacred and secular day, and the establishment of an unbroken seven-day week. Thus, the decree of the Commissars provides that there shall be 360 working days in the year instead of the former 300. From the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1st all factories, shops, co-operative, enterprises etc., shall be open every day without interruption. Work shall be arranged on the basis of regular "shifts", each worker or employee getting thirty-six hour holiday once every seven days. This holiday period shall be constant for each worker – that is, A. shall have, say, Wednesday afternoon and Thursday free every week, B. Thursday afternoon and Friday, and so on. Sunday shall be like every other day, a day of work for all but the group of workers whose release chances to come at that time. As this same system is to apply to schools, one may imagine what enormous

changes will come to the family life of Russia, and indeed to the whole social economy of the nation. *Pravda*, the great Moscow newspaper declares that this new seven-day week will accomplish three great purposes. First, it will cut down unemployment, by not less than 25 per cent. Secondly, it will greatly increase the total volume of national production. Thirdly, it will strike a death-blow at religion by elimination of Sundays and other church holidays.

This last feature is by all odds the most interesting of the three. Here is a real opportunity to test the vitality of religion – whether its observance depends upon the sanctity of a day, or a book or an institution. In our western world, the Sabbath is being lost not at one stroke but by a natural process of social evolution. This obviously means the passing of the old, sanctimonious, pietistic religion of rites and ceremonies, but not the passing of religion itself in any true and high sense. Our own guess is that this Soviet decree will shake superstition in Russia like an earthquake, and at the same (sic) emancipate real religion.

-*The Unit*

- ***Revolt,*** **3 November 1929**

3 RATIONALISM AND SCIENCE: DEBATING EUGENICS

The Call of Science

What is the difference between the wise man and the fool? The wise man is not infallible nor is the fool necessarily a blunderer. Both are liable to err. Both commit mistakes. But the wise man learns from his mistakes. The fool does not. Science is an attempt to draw the attention of man to the mistakes he has committed. Science is a call to mankind to learn by past failures. He who heeds the call of science is wise. He who does not is otherwise.

Elsewhere we publish an article by 'Simha' setting forth the changes in our method of living necessitated by recent advances in science. The positive measures advocated by Eugenics may not win immediate approbation in the circumstances prevailing in our country, however desirable they may appear from a theoretic point of view. But there is a negative warning conveyed by Eugenics which we desire our readers to clearly understand. Investigations relating to loss of heredity have not only indicated the direction in which the humanity should advance if it would improve its breed but they have also brought into clear relief one false step we took in the past. One of the most serious of blunders that we have been guilty of is an inculcation of belief in the heritability of acquired characters. No other idea has created such bad blood between friends and neighbours or has produced so much unnecessary suffering and misery. Wars have been fought to enlist its application to one set of facts rather than to another, causing tremendous loss of lives and untold sufferings to the nations.

Pride of descent is born of our vanity. We like to think of ourselves as superior beings. We delight in imagining that others are our inferiors. The sense of our supreme worth is so pleasing to us that we desire to display into the public gaze. But no human failing can find vent in public unless it is reduced to a dogma and sanctified as a creed. We have therefore exalted our prejudice into a doctrine. We have postulated that our own superiority is such a magnificent affair that we could not have acquired it in a single birth. Our forefathers through their generations accumulated the treasure for us; our descendents will continue to add to the store. Heredity is made to pile up human qualities

even as the miser who adds up one hard earned coin to another, never losing a farthing, ever on the look out to increase the hoard.

But science has stepped in and has expropriated our superiors from this ill-gotten wealth. It has been established that acquired characters are not inherited. A genius may be born of humble parents. The Shastri, learned in the scriptures may beget a son with antipathy to the sacred lore. The Devadasi may give birth to a Savithri (*the Hindu puranic character, symbolic of wifely devotion – editors*) A Gandhi may rise from among the Banias. It is no longer possible to construct intellectual dreadnaughts. The child at the Agraharam (*exclusive and secluded Brahmin residential neighbourhood – editors*) is not the superior of his contemporary in the 'cheri' (*an 'untouchable' residential quarter – editors*) either in intellectual ability or in moral worth. Both are liable to error as both are liable to catch measles. The mighty edifice of Varnashrama has crumbled like a house of cards. The orthodox ostriches will not face facts. But let the intelligent reader learn wisdom from the conclusions of science.

- *Revolt*, 12 December 1928

Eugenics

(By Simha)

"The aim of Eugenics is to prove that the breed of our citizens is a matter of vital importance when considering the future welfare of our country". So writes Major Leonard Darwin in his recent book on "What is Eugenics". Just as we improve the breed of domestic animals we should pay attention to the breed of descendents. The statesman ruling the destinies of a country should learn wisdom from the farmer in his stockyard.

There are two sets of influence that bring about the difference between any two men. One set is inherited, another is acquired. The human being is developed out of a minute germ and since no two germs are alike, no two human beings resemble each other. The differences found innate in the germs are said to be inherited. The germs meet with different surroundings as they develop and their qualities are modified by the influence of these surroundings. Such modifications brought about these surroundings are said to be acquired.

Let us first take the latter. Training, education, wealth, housing, culture, recreation and other social contacts are admitted to be of great

importance in the formation of the human qualities. If the well-to-do have big families and the poor small ones, the breed of the nation would be raised and there would be less pauperism, less discontent, less political animosity and more even distribution of wealth. Social reformers, therefore, ought to co-operate in the promotion of reforms aiming at these results.

One point, however, needs to be stressed regarding these acquired differences that are due to the reaction of our surroundings. Scientists have clearly established that the inheritance of these acquired characters is significantly small." The descendents of the blacksmiths will be no stronger and the descendents of the criminal no worse than the descendents of their brothers whose muscles and morals had not been thus exceptionally affected". We have therefore to conclude that modification of our environment though vital to the interests of mankind do not directly lead to any improvement in the breed of the race.

We shall next consider the qualities that are really inherited. We cannot stop a man having red hair or blue eyes if at birth that is his fate. Many bodily qualities are similarly inherited. Regarding mental qualities also inheritance seems to have great influence. The natural quality of the parent tend to be reproduced in the offspring. Hence parents with bad natural qualities ought not to be permitted to bring forth children. Attempts should be made to get rid of these undesirable types.

But the difficult questions arise as to how to get rid of these inferior stocks. There are two ways, persuasion and compulsion, the former being more desirable course to adopt. The deformed ought to be asked not to marry. Doctors should be consulted when persons contemplating marriage have insanity, epilepsy, consumption, etc. running in their families. A knowledge of methods of birth control should be diffused and every couple ought to have the facilities for preventing child birth if they so decide. The virtues of continence ought to be more widely advertised. Neither of these methods is injurious to health. Compulsion is justified in cases where persuasion fails because there is a paramount need to preserve the nation from deterioration. Sterilisation is advisable in such cases. In the case of males vasectomy can be performed under local anesthetics. Salpingectomy, the operation on females is a more serious affair. But in both operations the character and the life of the patient are not affected except that they cannot bear children even

though they may sexually unite. Sterilisation differs from other methods of birth control in that there is no going back on sterilisation. Sterilisation is objected to as an interference with the liberty of the individual. If we consider the welfare of posterity this objection will not have much force. But even this objection will not have application if the operation is performed after obtaining the consent of the party. As to the feeble in mind, the consent of parents or guardians ought to suffice. In the state of California in the United States, the method of sterilisation has been very successful.

Eugenics depends for its success on not merely the elimination of the unfit but also on the increase in the number of the good stock. Financial aid ought to be rendered to parents capable of bringing forth and rearing good citizens. The Family allowances ought to be worked as a system of insurance against the expenses of parenthood. In regard to income tax to be paid by parents, a deduction may be made on account of children. In the public services, the senior men may be paid less salaries and the junior more so as to tempt younger members to rear bigger families. Scholarships at the colleges and Universities may be extended so as to lighten the burden of parents who at present bear the entire expenditure of educating the children.

Exercise of care in the choice made in marriage benefits the nation. But if we make young people more particular, the better types may be discouraged from marrying while the inferior may multiply indefinitely. We should steer clear of this danger and allow young people ample opportunities of meeting their equals of the other sex. Before marriage each party should obtain a medical certificate declaring freedom from disease, and each party should also certify that he or she had never been mentally defective and had not been convicted of crimes. Severe punishment should be enforced for false statements in such certificates. Active propaganda should be undertaken to arouse the moral sentiments of the people in favour of Eugenic measures to better the breed of humanity. Members of bad stock ought to be made to rise to the moral fervour enabling them to sacrifice some of their domestic joys for the sake of posterity. Similarly the well-to-do should be made willing to sacrifice personal comforts to supply their recruits to the coming generation.

- *Revolt*, 12 December 1928

4 FREETHOUGHT FROM ELSEWHERE

The Fundamentalist Menace

Mr. Charles T. Gorham writes in *"The Literary Guide":-*

Only the resolute reasoner knows what Humanity has suffered from religion. The typical Christian is not interested in his faith and does not study its developments. To-day religion presents itself in two outstanding forms, widely differing in details, but each clinging firmly to the broken reed of authority: Rome on the one side, Protestant Bible-worship on the other. The Fundamentalist movement, which has been of late years, and still is, in full swing in the United States, is a religious phenomenon at once amusing and alarming. It is amusing because of its singular faith in human stupidity; alarming because it is trying hard, and with much success, to stifle human thought. It appears strange, but is not really so, for no one need be surprised at anything, however absurd, which springs from the union of pious zeal with invincible ignorance.

In his "War on Modern Science", published last year in New York, Mr. Maynard Shipley, the well-known President of the Science League of America, relates the story of this remarkable outbreak of fanaticism. Religious intolerance is always with us, but only during the last few years has it taken in America the organized form known as "Fundamentalism," which is substantially the old Inquisition with modern trimmings. It now claims to number more than twenty-five millions of the adult population of the United States, and is made up largely of the notorious Ku Klux Klan and two other organizations, the *Bible Crusaders* and the *Supreme Kingdom*, each of which is said to number at least five million supporters.

The avowed aim of the Fundamentalist movement is to kill the doctrine of Evolution – in fact, to suppress all knowledge which does not completely square with the teaching of the "Word of God." One of its leaders has said: "Any man that does not believe the Bible… is a traitor to his country." It is true the country has no State Church, but then it ought to have, and the Fundamentalists are out to make good that deplorable omission. Frantic efforts are being made to secure "compulsory teaching of the Bible in public schools and the establishment of Christianity as the State religion." To the

Fundamentalist there is, of course, only one form of Christianity, and that is his own. He has not the faintest doubt that translations of ancient documents produced long, long ago by unknown writers are in very truth the final authority in morals, history and science. There are, said one sage, only three books which are "necessary for any one to read" – the Bible, the hymn book, and the almanac – "therefore I am opposed to all libraries." Charming husband and father! Men like that are ruling millions.

Here are the "minimum basic doctrines" of this cheery faith: "The inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible; the Virgin Birth and the complete Deity of Christ Jesus; the resurrection of the same body of Jesus which was three days buried; the substitutionary atonement of Jesus for the sins of the world; the second coming of Jesus in bodily form, according to the Scriptures." Some of these doctrines may be in accordance with the Scriptures, but all of them are not, presuming, of course, that "the Scriptures" are rationally interpreted, a feat of which no Fundamentalist has yet proved him capable.

The teaching of Evolution and allied branches of science is to be absolutely suppressed, and in school text-books every reference, even indirect, which in any way countenances or recognizes Evolution, is to be struck out. In two States, Tennessee and Mississippi, these drastic measures have been passed, and for their violation penalties up to five hundred dollars may be imposed. Other Southern States, Mr. Shipely apprehends, are likely to fall victims to the foolish but splendidly organized forces of reaction; and even the more enlightened North is not beyond the danger zone. Anti-Evolution Bills have been introduced into the legislatures of many States, and lost only by small majorities. Texas has decreed that "no infidel, Atheist, or Agnostic shall be employed in any capacity in the University of Texas," and such books as Mr. Well's *Outline of History* have been publicly burnt. It is hoped by the fanatics, and feared by saner people, that at the Presidential elections next year the Fundamentalist octopus will clutch the greater part of the country in its tentacles. Should it do so, what will be the outcome? A State Church? If so, will it mean a Church which will insist on teaching Fundamentalist doctrines, or a Church pledged to obey the orders of the Vatican? On may expect difference of opinion on that matter.

How do these petrified bigots go about their work? By means of abuse, misrepresentation, and suppression of facts – by the methods of force.

One clerical gentleman terms the Modernists "a gang of Infidels... an insane set of ignorant educated fools who insist on lowering their own organic life to that of a monkey or animal. Take a jackass, a hog, and a skunk, and tie them together, and you have a scientific evolutionist or a Modernist." This gang "should be exiled out of our country". In one city the Ku Klux Klan, "decided definitely and positively that no Atheist should speak in that city.' To the Fundamentalist every Modernist, every science teacher, is an Atheist like Voltaire and Paine, only far worse (admire the accuracy!), and *his* form of Christianity is the only one worth a red cent. One representative in Georgia declared: "My children shall not be subject to the inroads of scientists. We must protect them from the poison that is being injected." Said another shining light: "If the Bible and the microscope do not agree, the microscope is wrong" It is so easy to prefer a theological inference to the testimony of one's own senses. A minister whose name need not. be given, because charges of arson and murder have been laid against him, stated that Evolution is "the most damnable doctrine that has come out of the bottomless pit."

These aberrations of the human mind form a curious psychological problem. Is it not astonishing that persons looking just like normal human beings, with some small particles of grey matter in their craniums, can thus rave against what they do not understand? For, be it observed, the fury is not the result of candid examination, but of willful ignorance. They fling aside with contemptuous abuse the idea of applying rational criteria to writings which they ignorantly revere as divine. They are blind to questions regarding the mental status of the writers of the Jewish Scriptures and the circumstances and times in which they were written, the criticism which might throw a great light upon them being regarded as impious. If such a nonsensical attitude were to become general in the United States, the future of that country would be indeed grave. The attitude will not, I think become general; but what limit can be put to the babblings of the willfully ignorant pietist? What is involved is a serious menace to human liberty in a country which was once called the land of liberty. A huge and thoroughly well organized revival of religious bigotry is in progress, and many people in Great Britain will give it a hearty welcome. The spirit of the Fundamentalist is the spirit of the persecutor, who would punish all opinions that differ from his own, and who relies upon an authority as fallacious and absurd as that of Rome. Does he realize what would be the effect on human

welfare of the assassination of thought and the enthronement of stupidity? Does he suppose it possible to suppress Reason for ever? It cannot be. The intelligence of the United States is surely strong enough to meet this revolt of the intellectually unfit. Knowledge must be organized as ignorance has been. Who can doubt the issue of the struggle? Great is truth, and the hosts of ignorance shall not prevail against it. The Republic will be free when it proves itself worthy of its heritage.

- Revolt, 7 November 1928

A Bolshevik Archbishop.

Alpha writers in the *Freethinker*:-

We hope that we shall not bring ourselves within the law of libel, but we feel it to be our duty to the National Church, which is supported by all right minded men who support it, and towards Christianity, which is accepted by all good men – who accept it, to call attention to a remarkable passage in the enthronement sermon of the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Lifting up his voice, and standing in full view of the people, he distinctly exhorted them to practice thinking, not shouting.

The advice was so startling, coming from an Archbishop, that the newspapers very properly called attention to it in large headlines as being a "remarkable address." And as the Archbishop was talking about religion they were to think. No wonder the papers called it a remarkable address. We go further, and say it is the most insidious, the most diabolical attack made on Christianity of recent years. It is equal to Mr. Maxton telling his followers that the time had come for shooting, not voting. We should not be surprised to discover that the Archbishop is a Bolshevik in disguise, that his very robes may have been purchased with money from Moscow. It is time that all true-blooded Protestants went into action.

Look carefully at this advice of our new Archbishop. What Scriptural warrant has he for the advice? None at all. Nowhere in the New Testament are we told that man is to be saved by thinking. Our Lord did not say that "All things shall be given to those who *think,*" but to those who believe. To be saved by thinking is, on the face of it, impossible. For the act of thinking might impose limitations on what

we ask by showing the absurdity of some of the things we desire. It is by belief that man is saved, and we know that if you begin by believing that what you ask for will be given and continue by believing that what you asked for has been given, there could be no doubt as to the efficacy of prayer. It is by faith that great things are done; and it will be recalled that even our Lord could do no great works in certain cities because the people there did not believe. Had they believed that our Lord could do great works and also believed that great works had been done, the waves of unbelief would have beaten vainly against them. I have no doubt that in these cities the people had given themselves up to thinking, and so nullified the work of the world's great teacher.

There is nothing in the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury that has reference to thinking. He was not elected because of his capacity for thinking, but for his power of believing. Never is the appointment of a clergyman determined by thinking. The only thing asked in such cases is, what does he believe? When Bishop Barnes was objected to in Birmingham, the chief offence alleged was that he had been thinking. The official creed of the Church the Archbishop is sworn to protect, does not lay it down that to be saved a man must think. It says that the only thing that will save a man is belief. About this there has never been a shadow of doubt in any of the churches. It is the one thing on which there has been complete agreement. It is the one thing that has proved that Christianity believed in the absolute equality of man. It saw no distinction between the fool and the philosopher. It paid no regard whatever to what they thought, the sole question was, what did they believe?

Christianity is a democratic religion, and in the world of thought democracy has no existence. Thought is of all things the most aristocratic. It laughs at the doctrine of the equality of man, and established division that are easily recognized. And never in the history of the Christian Church has thinking been made the condition of the receipt of honour. In the history of the Church there is not single saint in the calendar who was canonized because he thought. Take any list of alleged portraits of the saints, and see if this is not true, on the face of them. Men have been evicted from the Church because they thought too much, but never because they did not think enough. In heaven, thinking is not one of the depicted occupations. Its inhabitants sing, dance, laugh, spend

an occasional hour in watching the torments of the damned, but in heaven they do not think.

It is in hell that the thinking is done. For we are told that the damned sit there *thinking* of the eternity of their tortures, and the impossibility of escaping from them. According to the Christian scheme of salvation, men are saved because they believe certain doctrines. If they could not be saved until they understood them, their damnation would be certain.

The Archbishop tells us that what the Church needs most is peace. How is thinking going to secure this? When has thinking brought peace to the Church? The seed-plot of all the heresies that have troubled the Church of Christ is thinking. What is classic characteristic of Satan but pride of intellect, thinking setting itself against the devotees of the Almighty? Had Satan never thought, he might still be in heaven. There was recognition of this truth when orthodoxy met revolutionary thought with the epithet "child of the Devil'. When man applied the unlawful thinking to astronomy, the planets system upon which the Church relied was destroyed. And if one takes the disputes between Christians and scientists ever since, it will easily be seen that had these scientists believed more and thought less, the number of unbelievers would today be smaller than it is.

It was thinking that destroyed the flat earth upon which Our Lord relied, the demon which Our Lord taught caused all disease which has almost destroyed the fear of hell and greatly diminished the attractiveness of heaven. How did Paul become the follower of Christ? Not by thinking. So long as he thought he was its bitter enemy. It was walking along a road on a hot day that he suddenly saw a great light, fell down unconscious, and arose a Christian. Even then thinking might have destroyed the spiritual benefit of this message by taking it to be case of heat apoplexy. But to Paul it was no such thing. He did not say, let me think about what had happened to me, but let me believe.

Religious truth has come by illumination, by sudden inspiration, never by thinking. The lives of the most saintly characters teach this. Their prayer was never: "O Lord help my thinking", but, "O Lord help thou my unbelief", make me believe, not make me think. And in one religious autography after another you will see how the Lord answered their prayers. When he made them believe he almost stopped their thinking.

And now we have an Archbishop urging this revolutionary, this incendiary doctrine upon his followers. Nothing like it has occurred before. Beaten in the attack on the Prayer Book, the enemy has now turned his attack in a new direction. I discern the hand of aethistic Russia in this. I suggest that an inquiry be held as to the Archbishop's antecedents. Is he Russian? Has he any undisclosed sources of revenue? Darkest thought of all, is he really Cosmo Gordon Laing, or have the emissaries of Moscow murdered him, hidden his body, and then sent one of their representatives to masquerade in his stead? The subject is surely worthy of serious consideration.

- *Revolt,* 9 January 1929

Religions

Mr. Charles T. Gorham writes in the *Literary Guide* of February 1929:-

So great and so harmful are the excesses to which religion has given rise that one is sometimes tempted to regard religion as a disease. You never meet with a religionist who considers it a disease; he is like the consumptive who thinks he is in excellent health. And the more closely a man's religion approaches to sanity the more likely will he be to treat its aberrations as due to the inborn depravity which we are supposed to have inherited because Adam and Eve sampled some forbidden fruit. Of course Adam and Eve never existed but those who believe they did seldom realize that our so called "first parents" seem to have had no particular religion before their "fall"; possibly they developed one afterwards. This may not mean that religion is an abnormal state of mind, for it must have existed long before the Garden of Eden was prepared for the unfortunate gardener who "lost his job" suddenly. Religion was a necessary outcome of the ignorance and the fear of the unknown which were everywhere manifested by primitive man. The modern student need not puzzle his head greatly as to whether religion is an innate or an acquired characteristic; he is concerned either with the extraordinary variety of the forms in which it has been manifested.

The tendency of religion to become fanatical may be explained by theologians to their own satisfaction, though by the lay mind the distinction is not readily grasped. Why should an instinct or impulse alleged to be divinely implanted so readily lend itself to ill-will, to

violent and surly intolerance of other people's opinions? The reason is that men *feel* strongly about religion, though why they should feel strongly on matters of which they know nothing or very little is a conundrum for the psychologist. This combination of strong with invincible ignorance has been the bane and the disgrace of religion. Reason is the sole antidote, and, so far, the human race as a whole has not shown any remarkable power of reasoning or any particular desire to possess it.

– *Revolt,* 13 February 1929

The Gospel of Reason

('Broadcasting Address' by the Secretary of the Rationalist Press Association, delivered at the London Station)

This little address is called "The Gospel of Reason", because I believe that if we all followed faithfully the light of Reason we should soon have the millennium here.

What is Reason? One might say it is simply the activity of the mind. If it is not the whole mind, it is by far the most important and the most reliable part of the mind; it is the function of drawing conclusions and forming judgments. It is the only instrument in our possession by which the statements may be analysed, compared, and supported or refuted. It is the means by which we see that thoughts and words are in harmony or out of harmony with fact – plain, undeniable fact.

For various causes some persons distrust reason. They jeer at the mistakes and failures of Reason – as if anyone claimed infallibility for it. They pounce upon every erroneous opinion of science as a proof that science is generally wrong. Parrot-like they trot out the phrase 'science falsely so-called', as if no true scientific method existed.

As long as all truth is not known there are certain to be errors and failures. But the effort to use our only means of gaining knowledge is more likely to result in worthy achievement than the deliberate refusal to employ them. Prove that reason cannot be trusted, and you would commit intellectual suicide. For how could that be proved except by reasoning?

Reason and faith are sometimes spoken of as if they were a great gulf fixed between them. That by no means follows. They are both mental processes. The only difference is that faith is tentative and incomplete

knowledge – a groping in the twilight. Reason seeks by patient research to know the whole truth and rejoice in the sun light.

Reason tends for more than faith to promote unity of opinion. Faith is prone to run to all sorts of absurdities. But, if they reason, men are bound to agree when they see that a particular assertion precisely fits the fact. The difficulty with speculative opinions is that we have so few facts to go upon – sometimes none at all –and where assumptions are made to do duty for certainties it is Reason that determines which are most likely to be right.

Reason is not opposed to emotion, but regulates it. The emotions furnish valuable spurs to action, but all history shows how dangerous they become if Reason is deprived of its legitimate control.

Sincerity is one of the most beautiful moral qualities, but Reason enhances its value. You may with genuine sincerity act up to your convictions, but if they happen to be wrong convictions you may get into trouble. Ignorant sincerity has been the curse of the world, and religious persecution has been one of its fruits. The persecutors acted in accord with the spirit of their age. But it was an age which had not elevated Reason into the guide of conscience.

Reason is universal. Everyone uses it according to his capacity and knowledge. As the knowledge increases the capacity grows and Reason becomes better equipped for the work which every day has to be done. Its exercise brings out the best that is in man, just as physical training increases the power and efficiency of his frame.

The wise men of ancient Greece knew that Reason was the guiding principle of life. And in the book of "Proverbs' the praise of the wisdom that is 'above rubies" is the praise of the Reason. The old guesses at the secrets of the universe led to the revival of learning. The unknown inventors of the alphabet, of fire, of tools, of ships, of the mariner's compass, of paved roads, and wheeled vehicles were the forerunners of the men to whom we owe printing, steam locomotion, the postal system, and the doctrine of evolution, telegraphy, and the wireless. All honour to the pioneer!

These things have not come by faith or vague spiritual aspirations that cannot be translated into deeds. They are the result of hard work, of resolute and incessant investigation of the 'laws of nature'. We cannot explain the universe, but we can keep on trying.

Reason is opposed to authority as mere authority, because it has an objection to narcotics. If you accept authority without question, you deny Reason; you give up your intellectual birthright for a mess of pottage. If you wish to know whether authority is right, you must use your reasoning powers. Every man has a right to his private judgment, but he is morally bound to see that his judgment is as correct as he can make it.

Reason negates supernaturalism, because it sees no valid evidence for claims that assume interferences with natural law. Such claims are against the weight of evidence.

Reason dictates right conduct because it is found that right conduct is the best for everybody in the long run. The highest ideals are those which best serve the permanent interests of the race. There are no nobler ideals than those of truth and justice, and these have been evolved in the course of long experience.

Nature commands us to rise to the summit of our powers, to realize our highest capacities. The formula "Live according to nature" needs a little qualification. It means, follow the best that Nature has so far evolved and to do that, you must have faith in Nature's power to overbalance evil by good.

Knowing that our strength is but feebleness that our temptations are many, and that in our ignorance we cannot reach ultimate truth, Reason enjoins universal tolerance, universal sympathy, and universal charity to all shades of speculative opinion. Men do not willfully embrace error.

Reason is essentially constructive. To remove error is to clear the way for advancing truth. Reason does not disintegrate; it binds. It aims at the fullest liberty of others. Its duty is to discriminate between opinions and, where a decision cannot be arrived at, to hold the judgment in suspense.

This test has to be applied to all debatable questions, with special relevance, one may say to questions of religion, and we should face the result without fear or favour. If the endless difficulties of religion are ever to be cleared up, it will be by fresh light shed on them by Reason and research.

Finally, Reason bids us to be hopeful of man's future, because so much has been achieved in the past. Through all the struggle, all the folly, all

the suffering, Reason has held aloft the torch that guides humanity along its devious way; nor need any fear that process of improvement is about to end. To point men to the great heritage of the past, to awaken them to glorious powers and possibilities, to urge the cultivation of Reason, is to preach the only gospel that will endure, because it stands on the 'impregnable rock' of Truth.

- *Revolt*, 27 March 1929

What is Truth?

Jesus answered: "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness into the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,"'

Pilate saith unto him: "What is truth?"

According to the belief in which most of us have been brought up, Pilate's question was answered almost as soon as it was spoken. The act of crucifixion, to which he delivered Christ, was the climax of a revelation. A divine revelation. A revelation designed by God for the eternal illumination of the human mind and the complete salvation of the human soul.

That was about two thousand years ago. Today the vast majority of people are not even nominally Christian. Among those nominally Christian the majority are either openly skeptical or merely indifferent, while the minority are riven into sects perpetually disputing over the real meaning of the revelation.

Since the dawn of organized Christianity the argument "about it and about" has never ceased. Among the first Christians there were differences of opinion on whether Christ had come to save the Jews in particular or the Gentiles in general. Early Church Councils were marked by violent and sometimes bloody recriminations on points of divine doctrine. When the Church grew powerful it developed its missionary service on a large scale and finding even its supernatural message slow of acceptance hastened the good work of conversion with crusades of slaughter and pillage.

Later, from within the Church itself, there grew up an organized revolt against the errors which the Church taught. The reformers claimed to have found the true truth in the Bible, not in the traditions of the Church. Since the Reformation the Roman Church has held

obstinately to its error, while the Protestents have produced a multitude of competing sects each one claiming to represent the genuine essence of the divine revelation.

A hundred years ago every Protestant believed without the least hesitation, that the Bible was literally the Word of God. Today this belief survives here and there as a mental curiosity. Among educated people it has vanished, along with the religious belief in miracles, in the efficacy of holy relics, in the earth being the centre of the Universe, in the existence of demons, in witchcraft, in the eternal damnation of all but a few selected souls.

We know now that these and kindred beliefs are false. Yet they were once beliefs defended by the Church – the inheritor of divine truth – with banishment, torture and death.

While the "truth" of two thousand years ago has been dissolving under dispute and doubt, a new body of truth has been forming and strengthening. It is the truth which the Churches, from the days of Galileo, have sought to slay – the truth we gain from the patient study of our bodies, our minds, the earth beneath us, the stars above us. Each generation has added to the mosaic of sciences and made firmer and clearer the message that knowledge bears for the guidance of human endeavour.

Pilate's question may never be fully answered. But we have at last set our feet on the path that leads to the answer.

- *R.P.A. Tracts for the Millions*

- *Revolt*, 24 April 1929

God and the Elections

Mention of the election suggest just one other thing. Religious considerations, have bulked rather largely n this election, writes Mr. Chapman Cohen in *The Freethinker*, as I suggested some time back they would. There are quite a number of Non-conformist parsons putting up for Parliament, and some will certainly get in. Cardinal Bourne calls upon Roman Catholics to make a promise to put "Rome on the rates" – more than is the case at present, a test question, and to vote only for such candidates as will promise their help. Never mind any other issue, he says, let this one be decisive. Help the Church first, and let all other things come afterwards. That is all quite usual, so far as

talk is concerned, but what part does genuine religion play in it? The Catholic Church has arranged the usual excursions to Lourdes and brought back its usual bath of "cures." Not to be behind hand, certain sections of Protestants have tabulated their list of miracle cures. The Yorkshire Vicar thinks he can get good crops by praying over the fields. The Bath parson thinks he will help the tobacconist by blessing his shop. But none of these people even claim that the election figures will be decided by similar means. They tell you that it is God's will you shall act in this or that manner, the Archbishop of Canterbury has issued a prayer – at one penny a dozen which will inform God almighty what his followers expect from him, but none of them appear to place much reliance upon God in the matter of the election. They seem to place no more reliance upon God than did King George and Queen Mary during the Kings recent illness! Yet, surely, if God can help the fishing industry after the blessing of the nets, if he can boost a tobacconist's business or procure good crops, surely, he can manage such a little thing as a general election!.

Perhaps, the real reason why these political gentlemen do not leave it to God, is that an election is a definite affair, and the result can be seen within a very short time. Recovery from illness, growing a crop etc., are things on a different footing. The element of uncertainty is present and where that exists religious opinion has always a chance. Besides, looking after the crops has always come within the province of the medicine man and something is to be said for the power of association. After all, we do not become intelligently reasonable by putting on trousers nor scientific by driving a motor car. The medicine man is a medicine man whether dressed in a black suit with a dog collar, or with a scanty covering of paint and feathers. To say that, means also that his followers, while following him in a change of dress, remain loyal to him in the continuity of their mental outlook. Savagery belongs to no particular time, but runs through all time, in diminishing quantity, one hopes, but it is there. And today all these primitives have a vote at least in this country.

– *Revolt,* 23 June 1929

What do the Clergy Think About?

Mr. Irving Levy writes in *The Truthseeker*

The question frequently arises as to whether the clergy as a whole are

not in the moron class. Their infantile attitude towards the problems of life and their absurd standards of conduct justify such an inquiry. Here is the mental pabulum they serve as culled from their sermons of Sunday, March 24 and reported in the New York Press of the following day.

Read and weep or laugh, as the spirit moves you.

No. I

One hundred and twenty people were burned to death while viewing a picture at a cinema theatre in Vladimir, Russia. At the public funeral the village priest relived himself of the following during the course of his sermon:

"This would never have happened in the old days when men feared God. It is a judgment upon an unbelieving generation. The victims who perished in the flames died quickly. But what about the eternal flames of hell that await sinners and blasphemers and those who deny god's name?"

Bless you, dear priest, for your sweetness of character.

No. 2

Theology and nonsense hold close kinship. A perfect example is the following vaporizing of Rev. R. A. Brown of the New York Glad Tidings Tabernacle:

"Electricity is the best agent by which we can illustrate the workings of the Holy Ghost. Electricity can do almost anything. The same is true of the Holy Ghost."

Cross word puzzlers and mental magicians, get busy and try to make sense out of this verbiage.

No. 3

While the next exhibit is not a clergyman he might readily be mistaken for one. The speaker is Supreme Court Justice Callaghan, the gathering the Bible class in Brooklyn. He stated that Bible classes reduced criminality and added this amazing statement:

"Every man should go to church whether he believes in God or not for the good example he is setting for the youth".

A splendid instance of important role hypocrisy plays in religion!.

No. 4

Bishop J. L. Larned of Long Island got away with this one:

"The existence of hospitals and the changed status of women in the modern world and similar matters are the result of Christian influences".

Do not Biblical teachings advocate healing by prayer, and do not Paul and the Christian fathers literally wipe the floor with woman? And do not the facts of history belie these pious assertions?

What is a mere untruth among religionists!

No. 5

For temerity, this specimen arouses admiration.

The Rev. J. S. Durkee of Brooklyn very modestly says:

"The plan and program of Jesus Christ are the last words in financial, social political and religious wisdom"

Away with all schools, teachers, books, and studies. Let us follow Jesus – to chaos.

No. 6

The Rev. R. Norwood of Park Avenue Church can shake hands with his brother priest from Vladimir, Russia. In his sermon he said: "The World War is an example of how God may bring a scourge to stop blasphemy", and then warns his audience that God is prepared to wreak his vengeance today for misdeeds, making specific reference to the oil scandals of Washington.

Nice prospect! Will the Lord limit his punishment solely for the guilty ones?

Thus speak the representative clergymen of an enlightened section of our country. And millions of misguided people look to this class for guidance.

- *Revolt*, 29 May 1929

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